

## Ep #76: Leadership, Friendship, and Navigating Shifting Waters



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sandy Linda**

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with Sandy Linda

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Have you ever felt stuck between loyalty to an old friend and your growth? I'm diving into a powerful question from a rising leader who's facing a conflict many of us encounter on our growth journey. Stay with me as I explore the stepping stones that help us cross difficult waters can become the very ones we need to leave behind.

Welcome to *The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy*. Hosted by Master Certified Life Coach and fellow trailblazer, Sandy Linda, this is your space to discover how life's biggest challenges can ignite profound transformation—where grief becomes growth, setbacks become stepping stones, and your unique story lights the way for others. If you're ready to turn life's challenges into opportunities for leadership, legacy, and forward momentum, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Hello creative humans and my fellow trailblazers. During my daily walks by the riverside near my home, I observe the water level changes after the rain. Rocks that were once stepping stones were now flooded and new paths have appeared. It reminded me so much of our leadership journeys, how what once serve us might not be the right path anymore. And that's exactly what we are discussing today.

Today's episode, the things that once help us along, may be the things we have to leave behind and trust me, I've been there. This is a special Q&A segment, offering wisdom and exploring opportunities to work together.

I received a powerful question from one of our dedicated listeners. She writes, "Dear Sandy, your insights have guided my journey to leadership, but I'm struggling with something we rarely discuss. I have been friends with my colleague for eight years. We started as entry-level associates. Since my promotion to department manager, she constantly makes sly remarks about how corporate I have become. She shares private team information with other departments and seems to undermine my authority in meetings. Yet, every time I think about creating distance, I feel overwhelming guilt because she was there for me during my divorce three years ago. How do I honor our history while protecting my leadership journey?"

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This question touches the heart of what so many ambitious women face. The guilt of outgrowing relationships that once served as lifelines. When you weather storms together, when someone has seen you at your most vulnerable, it creates a bond that feels almost sacred. Yet leadership, like all forms of growth, sometimes require us to make tough choices about who continues our journey.

Think of your leadership journey as navigating a river. Each relationship in your professional life is like a stepping stone, helping you cross from one bank to another. Some stones are solid purpose, providing unwavering support as you progress. Others might have seemed sturdy when you first tested them, but as the waters of responsibility rise, they become slippery, unstable, or disappear.

When we first step into our careers, we carefully test each stone, finding those that feel secure. We build trusted relationships, create alliances, and form friendships that help us navigate uncertain waters. These early stepping stones are crucial. They help us gain confidence, find our footing, and learn to trust our senses. But here's what they don't tell you about leadership. As you progress, the river widens, the current grows stronger. The stepping stones that served you all together in shallow waters might not be the ones you need to cross deeper channels.

In our listener's story, her friendship was once a necessary stepping stone solid, reliable, a safe place to rest during the turbulent waters of divorce. When someone supports you during your darkest moments, they're not just helping the person you are. They are investing in the person you can become. Your friend's support during your divorce wasn't meant to keep you in that space of vulnerability forever. The intention was to help you find your strength, gain confidence, and finally succeed.

But now, as the waters of leadership responsibilities rise around our listener, this one steady stone has become slippery with undermining comments and breach confidences. Think about the hidden currents this creates in your team environment. Every time your former friend shares private information or makes sly remarks about you becoming too corporate, it's like watching the water slowly erode the bank where your team stands.

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Your team members notice which stones you choose to step on, how you handle the wobbling ones, and whether you're willing to abandon unstable ground. The most challenging aspect of the journey is recognizing when a stone that once served as a crucial rest point now sits too low in the water. This brings us to a crucial truth about leadership. Sometimes the most important decisions we make are not about where to step next, but about which stones to stop using.

When you continue to rely on unstable stepping stones out of loyalty to their past reliability, you're not just risking your own journey. You're teaching your team to ignore their instincts about unstable ground. As a leader, your responsibility extends beyond your personal comfort. You are now responsible for creating safe passages for others. Your choices about which relationships to maintain and which to redefine don't just affect your journey. They impact everyone following your path.

Here's a framework to help you navigate your leadership journey in response to our listeners question. Map your current path of your stepping stone. Journal out the current dynamics. Note different examples where her actions undermine your leadership. This creates clarity about why change is necessary.

Your team members look to you for guidance, stability, and inspiration. They observe how you handle relationships, manage boundaries, and respond to challenges. Your friends' hidden actions, like a flooded stone, create dangerous undercurrents that threaten your leadership environment.

But leadership growth requires the courage to identify new, more elevated stepping stones that can support not just your weight, but the weight of your leadership responsibilities.

Honor the past while securing the future. Acknowledge the gift of past support. Write down every way this friend helped you during your divorce. This isn't to reinforce guilt, but to honor that chapter of your relationship.

As you navigate this transition, hold both truths, deep gratitude for the support that helped you survive and unwavering commitment to the growth that helps you thrive. Remember that every outstanding leader stands on the shoulders of

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those who supported their journey. Yet leadership itself demands that we sometimes rise beyond the comfortable confines of old relationships. Not out of ingratitude, but out of respect for the calling that pulls you forward.

Create new pathways. Finally, begin creating gentle distance through professional boundaries. This isn't about severing ties, but redefining parameters. You have a responsibility to cultivate relationships that support growth and carefully manage those that might hinder it.

Setting boundaries with toxic friends isn't just an act of self-preservation, it's an essential element of responsible leadership. It's about understanding that leadership carries responsibilities that extend beyond personal relationships. Your choices influence the growth and development of everyone in your professional scope, including yourself.

Your courage in addressing toxic relationships becomes a lesson in professional development for everyone watching your journey. Leadership isn't just about finding new stepping stones. It's about having the wisdom to recognize when familiar paths no longer serve our journey.

Remember, the stones that help you cross yesterday's rapids might not be the ones you need for tomorrow's journey. That's not a betrayal of the past. It's an honor to your future and those who follow your lead.

Sometimes the most profound act of leadership is showing others it's okay to leave certain stones behind. Not because they weren't once valuable, but because your journey now requires different kinds of support. Each stone you choose to step on or step past becomes part of your leadership story, teaching others about growth, boundaries, and the courage to move forward.

The river of leadership never stops flowing. New challenges arise, water levels shift, and stones that once seemed immovable might need to be reassessed. Your responsibility as a leader isn't to remain loyal to every stone that once supported you, it's finding and maintain a path that others can safely follow.

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Thank you for your thoughtful question about navigating friendship while developing your leadership skills. Questioning and receiving valuable feedback may prove beneficial to our listeners.

Now it's your turn. Think of one relationship holding you back this week and write down a step you can take to adjust those boundaries. And remember, leadership is not just about personal growth, but about the impact you have on those around you. Start today by leading from within. Until then, keep journaling your course with courage and wisdom. Sometimes the bravest thing you can do is choose a new path forward.

Thank you so much for listening. Bye everyone.

Thanks for joining us on *The Reinvention Lab*. If today's episode inspired you, don't forget to follow and share it with someone who's ready to turn their challenges into opportunities. Want to take your journey to the next level? Visit [sandy linda.com/program](https://sandy linda.com/program) and apply for coaching today. Together, we'll turn your story into a legacy. Until next time, keep moving forward with purpose, passion, and power.