

## Ep #86: Negative Feedback: How to Break the Cycle That Holds Women Leaders Back



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sandy Linda**

[The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy](#)  
with Sandy Linda

## **Ep #86: Negative Feedback: How to Break the Cycle That Holds Women Leaders Back**

Have you been in a meeting that felt like a courtroom drama? Where someone was going to be found guilty? Where feedback feels like a weapon instead of a tool. Let's tackle the silent killer of great teams: the terrible feedback loop, where problems stay hidden until they become disasters. Stay tuned.

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 fellow trailblazers. Can you believe it? It's May 2025. Time flies. Here on the East Coast, we're finally enjoying sunshine and cherry blossoms that make everything feel possible again.

Today marks the start of Mental Health Awareness Month, which is deeply personal to me as I am an advocate for mental health. Many of you know about my journey through past losses in my professional life. That promotion I didn't get early in my career left me defensive and scared of criticism for years. But learning to transform that experience changed how I approach feedback, which connects to today's Q&A segment.

During the Mental Health Awareness Month, there is a theme that I love. In every story, there's strength. This theme reminds us that our challenges, including difficult feedback conversations, contain hidden growth opportunities. And I will leave you the link in the show notes to learn more about Mental Health Awareness activities. I am sharing how to transform tense, blame-filled conversations into opportunities for growth, especially for our wonderful women leaders.

So today's question comes from Jessica in Seattle. And she writes, "I recently took over a marketing team stuck in a negative pattern. Team meetings are

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tense, feedback is taken personally, and people seem more focused on avoiding blame than solving problems. How can I transform this negative feedback loop into a positive growth cycle? I want to build trust, but I'm not sure where to start.”

Thank you Jessica for your vulnerability in asking this question. Many leaders silently struggle with this challenge. Before I dive into answering this question, I want to share something jaw-dropping that I read.

Research shows that about 76% of top-performing working women receive negative feedback from their bosses, compared to just 2% of high-achieving men. Let that sink in for a moment. 76% versus 2%. This isn't just about making meetings more pleasant. This disparity shows why transforming feedback culture is essential for creating workplaces where women can thrive. Addressing negative feedback loops tackles a major and unspoken leadership challenge for women.

Understanding why your team might be stuck in this negative cycle starts with recognizing larger patterns. Given that high-achieving women are more likely to receive negative feedback than their male counterparts, it's no wonder many team members, especially women, enter feedback conversations bracing for impact.

Jessica, if workplace feedback seems harsh or critical, know that this isn't just your perception or leadership style. Data confirms that women often face unjustly negative feedback, even when performing at high levels.

A few years ago, I recall a former associate leading a creative team at an organization. What started as occasional tension during project reviews became a full-blown negative feedback loop. Team members stopped bringing up problems early. Meetings became silent zones where people nodded along while mentally updating their resumes.

The turning point came during a fatal product launch where issues everyone worried about, but no one felt safe mentioning. It created a public failure. That

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Monday morning, she faced a team expecting her to point fingers and realized something had to change in their communication.

Before I continue, please leave a rating or comment on your podcast app if you're enjoying this episode or any other episodes. Your feedback helps other women's creatives and leaders find these insights. And I love hearing how these ideas resonate with you. Every five-star rating brings this message to someone who needs it.

Now, let's get back into answering Jessica's question. So, Jessica, here are three powerful strategies that transformed my team and worked for many clients.

First, reset expectations through a feedback reboot. And what is that? Schedule a meeting to discuss team communication. Make it clear this isn't about blame, but about creating new norms together. When I did this with my team, I asked: When did you last receive helpful feedback? And what makes feedback feel supportive rather than critical? The key is to listen more than you speak. You will be surprised how many people have never been asked these questions.

Second, model vulnerability, an advantage for women leaders. In your next team meeting, share something different you're working to improve about your leadership. When I open up about jumping to solutions before understanding problems, it changed the room's energy.

My team felt safer acknowledging their growth areas. Then introduce a simple feedback framework I call: "What? So what? Now what?" The "What" describes the unique situation without judgment. The "So what" explains why it matters to the team or project. And the "Now what" centers on forward movement. This structure keeps feedback constructive rather than personal.

Finally, celebrate progress openly and precisely. When you notice someone handling feedback differently or implementing a suggestion well, acknowledge it. Not with the generic phrase like, "Good job," but with a more precise

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recognition. Like I would say to you, Jessica, "I noticed how you incorporated everyone's input before finalizing that decision, leading to a stronger plan."

Do you see the difference between "good job" then providing a more precise recognition? Remember Jessica, transforming a team's feedback does not happen overnight. It took me three months to see the real change with my team. So my suggestion to you is be patient, but persistent. And focus on progress over perfection.

Let's recap what we have covered for transforming negative feedback loops. Negative feedback cultures unjustly affect women leaders. So, this transformation is not just nice to have, but essential for our success.

First, conduct your feedback reboot meeting to establish new norms. This will create psychological safety before changing behavior. Second, share your growth areas to model vulnerability and remove the stigma from improvement. Third, implement the "What? So what? Now what?" framework to keep feedback focused on the future rather than past mistakes. Celebrate success openly to reinforce positive developments.

Here's what leaders miss. Great feedback cultures aren't built on criticism. They are built on spotlighting growth. And I call this constructive visibility. And that includes normalizing, celebrating, and expecting everyone's improvement journey. It's about highlighting the path forward rather than just pointing out where someone stumbled.

Now, let me give you the dos and don'ts to remember. Do address feedback patterns privately before tackling them publicly. Don't wait for perfection to celebrate progress. Do connect feedback to shared team goals. Don't let one negative interaction reset your culture-building effort.

Jessica, I'd love to hear how these strategies work for your marketing team. Send us an update in a month or two, and we might feature your progress in a future episode.

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For everyone else listening, you're not alone in this challenge. For everyone who recognized their own team in today's discussion, share this episode with other women leaders struggling with similar dynamics.

Before we wrap up today, I want to hear from you. *The Reinvention Lab* thrives on your questions, challenges, and real-world leadership experiences. Are you navigating a tricky team dynamic, struggling with imposter syndrome, wondering how to reinvent yourself after a setback? Or trying to transform a workplace culture like Jessica? Whatever challenge you're facing as an ambitious women leader, I'd love to address it in a future episode.

And I always request that you could send me an email because I do read emails with the subject line Q&A Question. And include your first name, city, and a brief description of your situation. Though I can't reply to all requests, your question could appear in a future Q&A segment. Be sure to be precise about your struggles and what you have tried. The more details you share, the more tailored advice I can provide. Don't worry, we'll only use your first name and location when we air your question. So you can feel comfortable being candid. Don't hesitate now, pause and send that question you've been thinking about.

Reinvention isn't just about big career changes. It's about transforming everyday conversations. Keep building your legacy, one feedback loop at a time. Thank you so much for listening and have a beautiful week, everyone. Bye.

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](http://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.