

Embracing diversity of thought as a confidence builder!
She Said/She Said Podcast with Laura Cox Kaplan
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Hi friends, happy November and happy election week!

Today, rather than dive into the political fray, i want to talk about an element of women's leadership development that i think is often overlooked, but that is critically important.

One reason why I started she said/she said podcast was to create a platform where a broader range of voices and perspectives could be heard.

If you are a regular listener to this podcast, you're likely here because you appreciate and have been looking for this breadth of perspective.

I am a conservative one of the things that differentiates this podcast is that i'm willing to talk to women who I know have a different point of view from my own. Most of these conversations are not explicitly political at all.... But if you asked the women who join me, they would likely tell you that they sit Left, Right and Center politically speaking....

Rather than politics, the common thread with my guests is that they are women whose ideas and thoughtful perspective provide insight that is helpful and often inspiring. They take a positive approach to life and to engaging with others, and they have something to share that I think we can all learn from. Each of these

women is leading in ways that are unique to her but that brings value to others. It's an area of shared passion and one on which most all of us can agree.

Last week, speaking to a group of college women who are part of a Network of Enlightened Women Chapter, I was asked how to engage with individuals who have a different point of view. These young women and that question provided the perfect muse for today's post.

Engaging with those who think differently or with those who have a different political point of view is challenging. And in many ways the lack of tolerance for diversity of thought, especially on many college campuses, is ground zero for a phenomenon that I believe **is doing incredible harm to women, and to goals aimed at seeing more women in positions of leadership and power.**

Let me explain what I mean.....

Learning to debate and discuss issues civilly, and to seek areas of common ground, and learning to disagree with integrity....Those are skills. And they require practice.

They also are important elements needed to increase women's engagement politically and otherwise. It's important whether you are running for office, seeking the c-suite, chairing the school board, or advocating for changes in your neighborhood.

When we (women and men) are discouraged from learning how to debate issues, and do not seek a place where we can learn to do so respectfully, it has a bearing on our ability to build the confidence

needed to debate and ultimately find common ground. It also contributes to pushing us further apart....but that's another topic.

One way to counter this is by building relationships with those who have a different point of view. I've worked in and around politics for three decades. I've seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of it. But one thing I've learned is the value that comes from developing relationships that cross the political divide.

I'm reminded of a good friend who doesn't share my political affiliation who took to social media in my defense a couple of years ago. She did so not because she agrees with my politics, but because she's my friend. The reality is she and I agree on a lot. But we disagree on many issues too. But because we had invested time and energy in working together, and building a relationship around areas of agreement, it meant that I had a powerful ally in someone from the opposite party.

I think about this a lot when I'm asked how to pick mentors and personal advisers....or how best to build your personal board of directors or kitchen cabinet. I always say it's important to cast a wide net and not to overlook the importance of engaging folks who have a different point of view ideologically speaking. Their perspective -- because it's different from your own -- will make you smarter and give you insights you wouldn't otherwise have. Diversity matters, but it must include diversity of thought and opinion.

We benefit the most when our views are not constantly echoed, but are challenged in a manner that's thoughtful and that yields real learning and understanding. And, perhaps most importantly,

having that constructive exchange teaches us how to make stronger, better reasoned arguments....and it helps us become better problem solvers.

If I know anything about building confidence, it's that preparation and practice are essential. That tends to be especially true for women who value --often even more than men -- the importance of being prepared. When we don't seek opportunities to practice this skill, we don't develop the comfort or the effectiveness. And as a result, may be less inclined to engage at all.

I'm a big fan of organizations like NeW that just celebrated its 16th anniversary, as well as Running Start, and The Policy Circle, where I serve as a board director. Each of these organizations is helping women increase their confidence by learning how to disagree and debate respectfully which also increases the likelihood that they will engage on issues, take risks, write letters to the editor, run for office and more.

The founders of each of these organizations have joined me in earlier conversations on she said/she said podcast -- I will include links to those earlier conversations in the show notes for this episode.

I know reaching common ground can be hard. But I also believe it is an essential component needed to fully empower women, and it also happens to be essential for the future of democracy. So it's truly a win win.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this, or any other topic. Please send me an email through the website or via Instagram DM. You can find me @lauracoxkaplan and @sheSaidSheSaidPodcast

Next week, I hope you'll join me as my guest will be Adriana Carrig who is the CEO and Founder of The Little Words project. If you follow me on Instagram, you've seen her amazing bracelets including my customized She Said bracelet. We'll talk about how she's working to tackle bullying, why she created this concept, and the impact she hopes to have.

Until then, have a great week. Thanks so much for listening!

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