



The Hidden Cost of High Achievement for Women: *A focus on mental well-being*

You've worked hard to get to where you are in your career and to establish a personal life that brings joy and satisfaction. You've proven yourself in navigating complex challenges, you lead a high-performing team, and the success you've brought to your organization has led to a seat at the table (well, maybe). You're also an emotional anchor for the important relationships in your life, because that's who you are ("because that's just how I'm wired.") Wired indeed! All this can come with a hidden cost. This is where you need to invest in the one asset your success depends on most: you.

In my work with women, no one has ever argued against investing in their own care. What I find are recurring mindsets that impede the best intentions. Investing in yourself requires change – a change in how you think, which influences how you feel. Some of these feelings can be so uncomfortable that you may deny them because they challenge long-held beliefs about how you are supposed to feel. Ultimately, the change requires mastering a new mindset and behaviors, which takes practice before you begin to see different results.

I also find several common false beliefs (there are more than these three, but let's start here) that impede progress, including:

- I'll get to this when things calm down some – they won't, and neither will you.
- As long as I keep pushing through, I'll be okay. You CAN, but the end product or deliverable won't match the level of quality you're known for, and your level of anxiety could lead to burnout, chronic stress, and long-term health consequences.
- Self-limiting belief of "if I don't (fill in the blank), who will?" "No one else will do it the right way." "I'll look like a slacker and potentially lose my job/chance at a promotion."

Sound like you?

The weight of carrying these beliefs and the pressure to change are exhausting, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Additionally, every new effort towards change is likely competing against a history of discouragement and an unrelenting negativity bias (literally, how you're wired). You end up with layer upon layer of silent exhaustion, what someone describes as too many mental tabs open and never closed.

If being a high achiever and passionately committed to your profession has led you to this level of success, how can these same qualities be directed towards greater mental well-being - emotional regulation, healthier lifestyle habits and how you frame yourself and your life? Imagine bringing this same intentionality by making small shifts in mindset and behaviors, as an investment in yourself and making the changes you want to see. Why wouldn't you?

Where to Start: Start by challenging your beliefs

- 1) Calm – schedule a micro moment, 60–90 seconds of deliberate, calming breathing, to shift your nervous system out of threat mode. Are you already doing this? Try building up to 5" of what we call time-in, reflecting on one thing or person you're grateful for, or ask yourself, ***"What is the most kind and empathetic thing I can say about myself in this moment?"*** Write down your answer. This is about self-compassion, not self-criticism
- 2) Pushing through- this is one of the most challenging mindsets to reframe. This is a pivot point for you because there are truly hidden costs. Have you canceled a doctor's appointment for a meeting, or haven't scheduled a wellness exam?

Make that appointment, don't ignore your biometrics. Are you an "I'm fine" type? Maybe you are fine. Try turning your results into KPIs – something you are very familiar with.

- 3) If I don't, it will fall apart belief - it's harder to push against something than it is to push for something. Look for evidence that letting go of something you can't control will give someone the opportunity to grow, develop, and strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem.

How to Continue Making Progress? Give yourself permission to pause by creating intentional space in your 24-hour day. You CAN find, plan, and schedule 10-15 minutes.

- One way to reinforce this protected time is to keep a well-being diary. Start to notice patterns in your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that drain your energy—those moments when you find yourself saying “there's got to be a better way,” or “I just can't catch a break.” Even more importantly, recognize patterns when you feel energized, find yourself laughing out loud, holding the door open for a stranger, or picking up an extra coffee for someone you're meeting with.
- Plan to structure your conversations (any conversation) first around what is going well. This isn't pie in the sky; rather, it challenges default thinking and can lead to greater creativity and openness.
- Practice asking yourself whether your thinking is working against you or serving you well. Respond appropriately.
- Connect with the people and things that genuinely matter to you.

True mental well-being and your leadership success depend not on pushing harder or longer. Instead, how you invest in yourself, sustain your energy, and pay attention to signals, intuition, and moments of connection will show progress that YOU will notice – others too.

If you can build successful teams, lead through uncertainty, and solve complex challenges, **believe** in your capacity to build a healthier relationship with yourself.

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Schedule a complimentary consultation with me to explore how we can work together and achieve your health and well-being goals. <https://calendly.com/lburton-3/60min>

Your Coach: Linda is a National Board Certified Health and Well-being Coach (NBC-HWC)*, one of only 13,000 with this designation, a credentialed executive coach through the International Coach Federation, a certified Brain-Based Coach through the NeuroLeadership Institute, and a certified Positive Psychology-Based Health and Well-Being Coach through the College of Executive Coaching. A member of the Institute of Coaching at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School Affiliate, she holds a B.S. in Health Education from Virginia Tech and has completed coursework for an M.S. in Conflict Management at the University of Baltimore.*NBC-HWC Linda maintains an active, nationally recognized credential, follows the NBC-HWC Code of Ethics and is HIPAA compliant. A researcher, author, and TEDx speaker, Linda resides in Ellicott City, Maryland.