

WiP THEME: *Speaking Up/Being Heard*

Effective communication is key to leadership. It is important for a leader to know how to contribute ideas in a way that makes sure they are heard and included in the overall plans. Here are some ideas for exploring these questions with your Women inPower chapter:

1. Host a discussion. Some sample questions you can ask your group:

- Raise your hand if you feel like your ideas are usually heard and incorporated by the people you are working with. If yes, what are the keys to making that happen? If not, why not? What stands in your way?
- Do you often speak up? Or hold back? Why?
- Does being a woman make a difference in whether or not you are heard? How?
- Is there a time you have felt unheard? What was happening in that situation? What could you do to make sure your voice is included in the conversation?
- How can we commit to making our own voices, and those of other women, heard? (We love the idea of women acknowledging the accomplishments of other women in meetings, e.g. "John, that is an interesting idea. I think that is what Alicia was saying earlier," or, "I really like what Sara had to say and it made me think ...")
- Share an example of a time when you have seen a leader effectively communicate, especially in a difficult situation. What did you learn from that example?
- How does timing impact the ability to be heard?
- What role does each of these qualities play in being able to speak up and be heard: confident, assertive, smart, prepared? What others?

2. Work through an activity together.

- Have two people come to the front of the room. One tries to sell the other an encyclopedia she doesn't want. After a few minutes of interaction, ask the group to give feedback about the conversation. Repeat several times with different pairs.
- Divide the room into pairs. One person asks the other if it is okay if she smokes. Ask the second person to respond in a passive way. Repeat, and this time respond in an aggressive way. Repeat and respond in an assertive way. Switch roles and repeat.
- Come back to the group to name observations and learnings.
- Go around the room and each person picks a phrase (out of a hat) and a manner (passive, aggressive, assertive) and acts out that phrase ("It is time for this meeting to end," "No, I don't think that is the job for me," "I have an idea.")
- Go around the room, and each person says, "I commit to being more _____." And then, "I can be more _____ by _____."

3. Invite a speaker to talk about his/her experience. Some ideas for people you can ask:

- A family therapist or leadership coach. How do they teach people to assert themselves? What difference does effective communication make to their careers and the careers they witness?
- Ask your chapter for ideas. Pool your connections and identify someone you may already know.

How did it go? Did you find something worked particularly well or not so well? Did you follow the script or make up your own? What did your group learn? Share your experiences in the Women inPower Facebook group so we can all learn from each other.