

What got French women talking....

I wondered, are French women facing the same career issues as Australian women? And other European women for that matter?

In Paris last month I got my answer. I've had a well-observed inkling for a while that what women really want is a safe, supportive environment to talk openly about their dilemmas regarding career development, leadership roles and self-care. And I have had a strong desire to help provide that forum.

My workshop on rue Rivoli was called, 'How to succeed without selling your soul'. It addresses four areas or steps to creating a strong progression plan, from self-care to career planning, to Conscious self-leadership, to fulfilling a global purpose through our work.

When I presented a number of statistics on the picture of women's inequality in Australia, heads started to nod and agree; yes, it was the same in France. And we agreed it had to change – now. I felt our bond immediately deepen.

Moving beyond our exploration of the four intelligences related to self-awareness and cultural change we headed into a deeper activity, one I call 'The Destiny Dilemma'. It was here that the room exploded into a multitude of voices, each sharing their current Destiny Dilemma and listening intently to those who had partnered to help solve it.

I literally couldn't get their attention and found a glass and pen to bring the exercise to a close to save my now raspy voice while many implored me to give more time to explore their answers.

And the shared discoveries revealed how much they needed this time to bare their heart-felt concerns to someone truly willing to listen and help them find some resolve. To help them take a long-term view of the bigger picture. To build their life with meaning and purpose. To feel certain they could overcome their obstacles and begin to identify what these really were. To discover what their purpose was. To have greater awareness and commit (rather than say, 'I know, but I just have to....') and even to ask if they really needed to question at all, to let go and let their purpose evolve as a 'pending question' as one woman put it so poignantly.

What was clear as we explored the role our values play in those dilemmas was how we must come to trust them as givers of guidance, structure and vision, and act as mirrors for our wisdom to come forward so they can be resolved from within.

At the start someone asked me, 'Do you think emotional intelligence is here to stay?' I replied that in Australia we had now begun to move even further, into spiritual intelligence, the main thrust of my own services.

I walked away at the end thrilled to be truly 'global' in my business and in a wonderful city like Paris in springtime yet even more humbled by the vast reach of our shared destiny dilemmas as women around the world.

I was even more relieved our discussion had quickly gone beyond the triteness of the usual work-life balance to the Heart of the matter – my inkling proven that women know what they want, emotional intelligence is here to stay and, when given the right forum, women can find their own spiritually intelligent solutions.

Indira Kennedy
Director
Conscious Leadership Australia
+61 (0)412464548
ikennedy@consciousleader.com.au
www.consciousleader.com.au

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