

The logo for Exxaro, featuring the word "exxaro" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "x" is green, and the "a" is white. The rest of the letters are white.

POWERING POSSIBILITY

# Empowering women to step into leadership – A South African Mining Case Study

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# The Incident

Knowing what I don't know

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- Starting blocks in a specialist environment
  - My exposure to leadership: highly academic, internationally published, world renowned scientists

*What is your exposure to leadership?*

**Who are your role models on your leadership journey?**

- Therefore leadership = perfectionism and power in knowledge
- The incident... a choice between staying specialized or moving into “general” management

# Introduction

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- “Sitting at the table”
  - Embracing opportunity **AND** actively seeking opportunities in leadership positions
  - Believing women have something to offer in an unknown environment

# Staying authentic... “but in balance”

Knowing what I don't know

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- Female leader's challenge
  - Shame for women conformity to feminine norms, where they found the most important attributes to being female is being nice, pursuing the ideal body, being modest and being domestic (Mahalik, 2005).

What are female leaders faced with when trying to be authentic in difficult situations:

- Don't upset anyone, but speak your mind
- Be authentic, but not if you're shy or unsure about the subject at hand
- React, but don't show it, otherwise you overreact
- Always remain calm, collected, composed, dignified and poised, otherwise you are seen as irrational and emotional
- Don't be a knower, but also don't say that you don't know

# Staying authentic... “but in balance”

Knowing what I don't know

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*When a man says, “I don't know,” he is perceived as an authentic leader.*

**When a woman says, “I don't know,” it's perceived as weakness and incompetence (Liswood, 2019)**

# Staying authentic... “but in balance”

Knowing what I don't know

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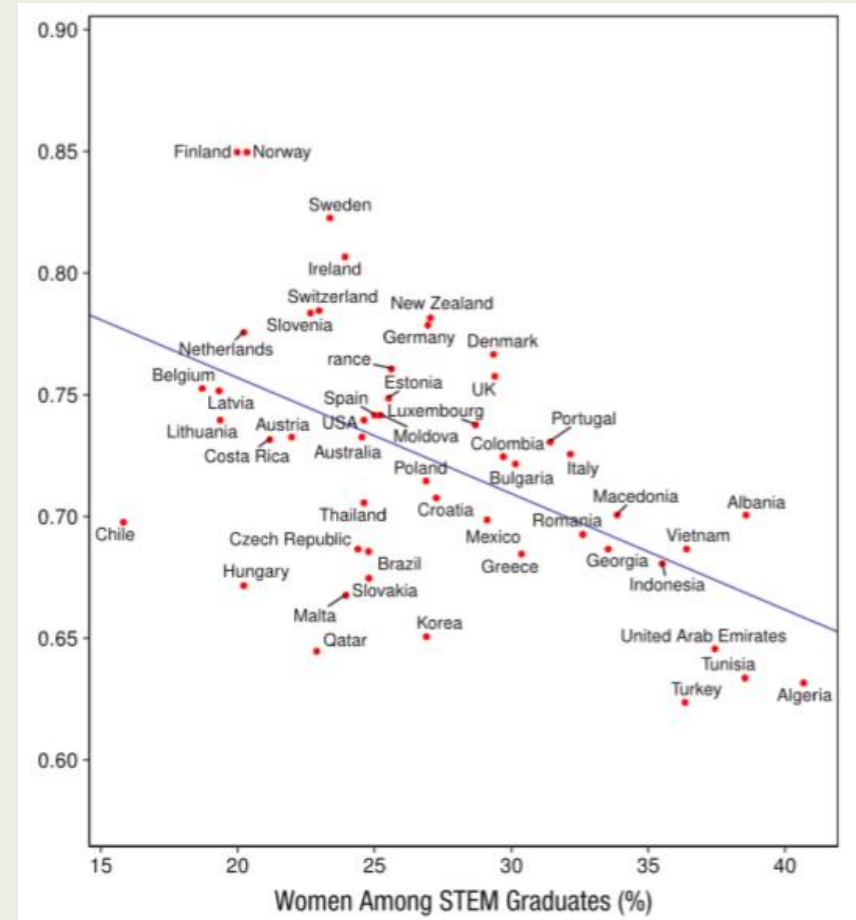
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- Laura Liswood, Council Of Women World Leaders
  - ...found that women form deeper connections, collaborate differently, find more creative solutions (born out of necessity), focus more on various stakeholders and tend to be better prepared
- Helena Morrissey, chief executive of Newton Investment Management
  - ...after a major financial crisis in UK, 2010, diversity was seen as part of a solution; the 12.5% of women on boards increased to 30%
- Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF
  - ...IMF research: adding one more woman to a company's management or board is associated with a boost in return on assets of up to 13%. Another IMF report concluded that banks are more stable when they have more women on their boards

# Staying authentic... “but in balance”

Knowing what I don't know

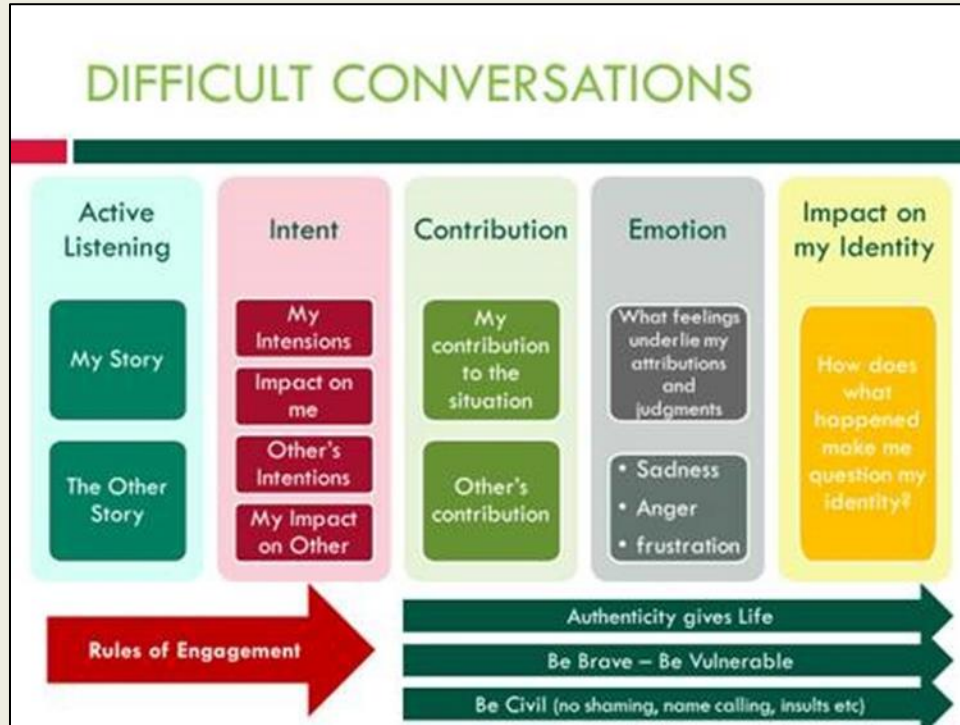
- I can be authentic, I can bring balance to a male dominated industry, I can mine diversity – why is this important?
- Women-in-STEM should focus their efforts on those young, would-be STEM women
  - Form programs specifically aimed at creating positive environments for girls to interact with STEM ideas (Reinking, 2018).
  - “Engineering and engineers are central to the process of innovation, and innovation drives economic growth. Diversity of thought is crucial to creativity, and by leaving women out of the process of innovation we lose a key component of diversity and stifle innovation” (taken from <https://www.nae.edu/>, 2017).
- Have the courage to show up and test the environment...



Number of female STEM graduates and their Global Gender Gap Index (y-axis), a measure of opportunities for women

# The Toolbox

## Difficult Conversations



### Rumble

Let's have a **courageous conversation**, even though it's very **tough** and **uncomfortable**!



Brene Brown, Dare to Lead



# Conclusion

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- Responsibility to break the bias!
- Stay authentic, stay accountable in remembering how to apply the power we have as leaders!
- Find common ground and build collective strength.
- Stay grounded in a strong foundation of self-worth and self-knowledge.