

# ACE WOMEN'S Network™ Michigan

*Mentoring Mondays*  
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Finally, we have made it to the 12<sup>th</sup> habit to examine, and according to the authors, it is one of women's greatest strengths. Yet, it requires discipline and a few simple tools to control and break the "downside" of this habit. Since this habit deals with neurological functions of the brain, most of the information will be actual excerpts from the text.

## **Habit 12: Letting your Radar Distract You**

"One of women's great strengths is their capacity for broad-spectrum notice, the ability to notice a lot of things at once. In researching *The Female Vision*, Sally and Julie Johnson found that neuroscientists have documented this capacity using functional MRIs, which give a picture of the brain in operation. These scans show that when women process information, their brains light up in a lot of different regions, taking in a multiplicity of details. By contrast, when men process information, their brain activity tends to be concentrated in one region.

"The result? Women's attention for the most part operates like radar, scanning the environment, picking up a broad range of clues, and paying attention to context. Whereas men's attention operates more like a laser, functioning tightly and absorbing information in sequence." Hence, *radar* vs *laser*.

"So, if your job requires you to analyze a lot of data, your neural paths will become more laser-like over time. . . . One problem for women is that organizations still prefer *laser* notice – 'just get to the bottom line' – and view it as a leadership behavior. This is not surprising given that, until a few decades ago, organizations were led almost entirely by men. Yet a well-developed *radar* can be a powerful asset at work. Being highly attuned to the details of relationships and to what people are feeling enables you to excel at motivating others, inspiring morale. It helps you negotiate and communicate with sensitivity and skill. It supports collaboration and teamwork. And radar helps you build the intimate friendships that support your resilience when the going gets rough."

There is a downside to radar: it's called the shadow side of radar. "A well-developed radar can make it difficult for you to filter out unhelpful distractions, scattering your attention and

undermining your ability to be present. . . . Radar may also be in part responsible for women's tendency to give themselves a hard time. Being hyperaware of other people's reactions can feed the fires of self-doubt and cause you to over-think your actions. Having an active radar may therefore be in part responsible if you have a tendency to ruminate."

The "left-hand column" is a discussion about "right-brain vs left-brain" functions. "In your left-hand column are the random thoughts and observations that run through your brain while you're doing something else. In your right-hand column is the task or conversation you're supposed to be showing up for. . . . A disciplined left-hand-column awareness can be an effective aid in communication, making you sensitive to how others are responding. . . . Blocking out what you notice is not a good practice." This may cause confusion which would make others wonder what you are trying to hide – you appear to be inauthentic.

So, there is a strategy or tool to help you manage the "left-hand vs right-hand" column thoughts: it's called "**reframing**" – seeing things in shades of gray rather than in black or white.

For example, let's examine this case study. "Taylor is a successful executive coach whose acute radar helps her intuit what her clients need. She says, I'm very confident one-on-one – you have to be as a coach. But I get self-conscious in larger groups because there is so much going on, so many reactions to read." The story is about Taylor's reaction during a speech that she was delivering to a large group when she noticed a guy in the front row who seemed skeptical of everything she was saying. He seemed irritated and she kept trying to figure out what was bothering him. Finally a woman in the back of the room raised her hand and asked a question. It turns out that a prior notice of the session had listed a different content description. The point is, Taylor had no way of know that the seemingly irritated attendee was expecting a different presentation rather than reacting to her as a speaker.

Here's where reframing comes in – viewing the situation in gray. Taylor could have imagined that the guy in the front row just had a fight with his wife or a coworker. Reframing the story would help Taylor focus on what she needed to say without losing her train of thought.

"Reframing is powerful because it doesn't force you to choose between the thoughts racing through your mind and whatever it is you're actually trying to communicate. It enables you to access all the richness of your left-hand column without getting bogged down in the trap of either/or. So, the good news is that an **overactive radar** is nothing more than a habit."

Like the other eleven habits described in the book, radar is a habit you can mitigate with the help of a few simple tools.

Next week, we will wrap-up the review of "**How Women Rise**" by Sally Helgensen and Marshall Goldsmith, with an overview of what's been presented and how we move toward "Changing for the Better." To secure your copy of the book, visit [www.hatchettbooks.com](http://www.hatchettbooks.com)