



## The Strength of Women Who THRIVE

Kathleen Walsh

In thinking about Thrive, the first thing that jumps out is the talent, strength and certainly the supportive nature of the group! Female leaders across the professional spectrum are part of what I would consider an extraordinary Encyclopedia Britannica series (remember those?). Ask a question.... You will get a response. Need volunteers, shout it out to Thrivers. Want to talk through a personal situation.... lean into the ladies! Anytime, anything, any topic.

So.... then I read the article that I have included in this publication "What 60 Years of Data Reveals About How Men and Women Experience Leadership". Not going to lie.....it was a little irritating to read (again) that women are subject to "proof initiatives" more commonly than our male counterparts. The underlying tone that females may not be as suited to be leading an organization, sitting in the C-suite, owning, and managing companies in addition to changing diapers, preparing meals, and folding clothes is preposterous. We can. We do. (and we are darn good at it for the most part). And, sadly, we do not shout it from the rooftops like we should.

Data is data and it is unlikely to change in my professional lifetime. Male, female or even our AI employees (cannot believe I just said this) ....as leaders we owe them training, support, feedback, challenges, tools and certainly opportunities. As employees, we need to ask, accept, listen, learn, and take advantage of what our employer puts in front of us. What is the old saying...."Your wings already exist. All you have to do is fly."

We know the landscape; it is time for us to create a "walkway" for our success. And certainly, we need to start shouting from the rooftops, only with a safety harness, helmet, and sturdy ladder of course!

Happy Summer!

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# What 60 Years of Data Reveals About How Men and Women Experience Leadership

by Dwayne Whitten, Wendy Boswell and Susan Oldroyd

Harvard Business Review

In 1965, an article published in Harvard Business Review asked the question: “Are Women Executives People?” The title was deliberately provocative, and the moment warranted provocation: of the 2,000 male and female executives surveyed for the article, a substantially large proportion of male executives viewed women in management unfavorably, not because of their competency to lead but because they felt the executive suite was an inappropriate place for them. Since then, work published in HBR has examined perceptions of women in executive roles at twenty-year intervals, with author teams using nearly identical questions from the 1965 research in both 1985’s “Compensation, Jobs, and Gender,” by Benson Rosen, Sara Rynes, and Thomas A. Mahoney and 2006’s “What Men Think They Know About Executive Women.”

To revisit perceptions again in 2026, we (three academics including one of the original authors for the 2006 piece) have drawn upon the same questions, alongside some modifications and additions to reflect the changing workplace, including questions on promotion criteria and perceptions of meritocracy. Our work includes responses from 193 U.S. senior executives across industries alongside additional, qualitative interviews with a number of respondents. What the combined data reveal is not simply that bias persists, but rather specific and troubling new developments. While attitudes improved sharply between 1965 and 2006, the years since have produced a gap in how men and women experience evaluation, standards, and opportunity. The divergence indicates progress on the surface, but deterioration underneath.

To continue reading, [click here!](#)



## July Books and Podcasts

### Summer Success Reads!

★ **The Guilty Feminist** – Hosted by Deborah Frances-White (Available on The Guilty Feminist): Recorded in front of a live studio audience, this brilliantly sharp show uses comedy to dismantle the modern workplace. Frances-White and an array of rotating comedians regularly mock the overconfidence of male executives while playfully roasting the systemic contradictions, imposter syndrome, and psychological traps female leaders face when trying to navigate male-dominated structures.

★ **Seriously Funny: Women Who Humor and Change the Rules** – Hosted by Kathy Klotz-Guest (Available on Apple Podcasts): This podcast specifically tackles how humor is used as a tactical tool by female leaders. Klotz-Guest interviews trailblazing executives about how they use unapologetic wit to disrupt the typical “boys’ club” boardrooms, contrast their collaborative approach against rigid masculine hierarchy, and manage fragile corporate egos without losing their minds.

★ **Work** – Hosted by Erika Ayers Badan (Available on LinkedIn): As the former CEO of Barstool Sports, Badan delivers fast-paced, laugh-out-loud, and completely unfiltered commentary on modern workplace dynamics. She regularly skewers corporate clichés and breaks down the harsh realities of leading aggressive teams, directly comparing the contrasting ways men and women handle ambition, executive stress, and office politics.

### Leadership Podcasts!

★ **Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead** by Sheryl Sandberg (Available on Amazon): Written by the former COO of Meta, this highly conversational bestseller combines personal anecdotes with data. It contrasts how men and women handle risk, negotiation, and ambition in the modern workplace.

★ **The Confidence Code** by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman (Available on HarperCollins): Written by two journalists, this fast-paced book explores the psychological differences in how men and women view leadership. It illustrates why men often comfortably “fake it until they make it” while qualified women hesitate.

★ **How Women Rise** by Sally Helgesen and Marshall Goldsmith (Available on Hachette Book Group): A highly practical guide that contrasts the career habits of men and women. It highlights how behaviors that help men advance—such as aggressive self-promotion—often backfire on women who try to lead the same way.

★ **The No Club: Putting an End to Women’s Dead-End Work** by Linda Babcock, Brenda Peyser, Lise Vesterlund, and Laurie Weingart (Available on Simon & Schuster): A relatable look at “non-promotable tasks.” It explores how male leaders easily decline office chores to focus on high-impact work, while female leaders are culturally pressured to take on the administrative burdens that stall their careers.

★ **Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders** by Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli (Available on Harvard Business Review Press): This book replaces the old “glass ceiling” metaphor with a labyrinth. It provides a readable overview of the hidden detours women face compared to men, showing how leadership styles differ as a result.



# Getting To Know The THRIVERS!

*Please meet ...*

Karen Nascembeni  
Chief Operating Officer  
North Shore Music Theatre

## **Tell us about your professional journey and how you landed where you are today?**

I've been fortunate to have enjoyed a long, diverse, interesting, and exciting career path. I started out at a young age working for over a decade in insurance, specifically National Risks Loss Prevention. From there, I went into radio at WBACH/North Shore 104.9 in a dual role of General Sales Manager and On-Air Host. After a long and successful career there, I was recruited by Comcast Spotlight to head up their North Shore office as the Local Sales Manager where I oversaw a team of advertising sales reps selling across 42 television networks, while also recording voiceovers for the company. I then checked off a bucket list item to work in the design world for a few years. I just happened to be in Chianti in Beverly the night that Bill Hanney bought the theater. I was invited to his table to meet him. A few days later, he called me and said, "I hear you're the face of the North Shore. I'm a busy guy...come be the face of my company." The rest is history. I started out as the Director of Corporate and Community Relations, followed by General Manager and now Chief Operating Officer for Bill's live theater division. I feel like every job before me prepared me for my current role, as I use expertise I gained from all these various careers in my job as COO.

## **What was the most challenging professional obstacle that you overcame and how?**

I've seen a lot of challenges in my four-decade career, but nothing compares to my COVID—19 journey. Surviving my own near-death experience and long hauler physical challenges, while trying to juggle the gut-wrenching loss of my beloved husband, father-in-law and several friends was daunting, to say the least. I only survived it by the grace of God for finding gratitude, coupled with the unrelenting support of my family, friends and co-workers who have stood by me to this day.

## **What are your guiding principles as a female leader?**

Number one is compassion. My COVID-19 story was featured in Donato Tramuto's book on compassionate leadership called "The Double Bottom Line...How Compassionate Leaders Captivate Hearts and Deliver Results." Many people believe that compassionate leaders are weak. It's quite the opposite. As Donato says in his forward, "Compassionate leaders are not weak. They are tough leaders who understand that they can be good to their people and deliver stronger results at the same time. In fact, taking care of your people actually leads to better results." Number two is respect. I say to my team all the time, I don't care if you like your co-workers, but you will absolutely respect them, despite your differences.

## **What would you tell your 18-year-old self?**

That's actually a really funny question because I feel like I'm still 18. I came out of the womb socially insatiable and have been consistent my entire life. When I was a kid, I had an unbelievable singing voice. In high school, people thought I was going to be the next Barbra Streisand. At 18, I became very sick with a thyroid condition called Graves Disease. After months of failed treatments, an eight-hour surgery which damaged my vocal cords derailed that dream. Always being glass-half-full, I thought, well, my speaking voice is a little more interesting. Maybe I can be a crazy morning show side kick girl, which is what brought me to broadcasting school. At 18, I was already blessed with a survival instinct which has served me more times than I can count throughout my life.

## **What is in your physical and emotional self-care tool kit?**

My body was so damaged during my COVID illness that I am still compromised to this day. I am so grateful to my personal trainer, Jill Tache who I have worked out with three times a week for over three years giving me my strength back and keeping me as mobile as possible. She is an incredible blessing to me, both physically and emotionally. I was also lucky enough to meet Susan Cooper, my amazing grief counselor who gave me the tools to survive my incredible losses. Of course, again, I am blessed with the kindest, most giving and loving family, friends and co-workers who continue to lift me up and have never left me behind.

## **Name three things that bring you GREAT joy outside of work?**

Live Music. Live Theater. Daily restaurant gatherings with family and friends.

## **If offered \$1,000,000 to use in anyway but for yourself & family, what would you do with it?**

I would use it to support the arts which are seeing unprecedented desperate times. Having access to the arts is critical to our happiness and quality of life.

## **What do you want your legacy to be?**

I was raised by two amazing parents who lead by example and were so kind to everyone they came in contact with. I want my legacy to be that when someone thinks of me, they will remember me for my kindness and generosity of spirit. It takes nothing but a bit of your time to change or enrich a person's life. The world needs more of that type of kindness right now.

# THRIVE Summit 2026

The 4th annual THRIVE Summit was a celebration of what makes this community so special—bringing together accomplished women from across the North Shore for a day filled with meaningful conversations, inspiring stories, and lasting connections.

The day began with an insightful keynote from Dr. Stephanie Peabody, who challenged us to think differently about women's brain health across every stage of life. Her engaging presentation highlighted the importance of protecting and optimizing brain health while reminding us that investing in ourselves allows us to lead stronger families, organizations, and communities.

In between sessions, the Marketplace buzzed with opportunities to support fellow members and local businesses.

Attendees then had the opportunity to customize their experience by choosing from a variety of breakout sessions designed to educate, inspire, and empower.

Throughout the day, one theme remained consistent: women supporting women through honest dialogue, shared experiences, and encouragement.

Following lunch, our closing keynote featured Jenny Holaday, President of Encore Boston Harbor, whose leadership journey captivated the audience. Her thoughtful reflections on leading with confidence, clarity, and compassion offered practical wisdom for women at every stage of their careers and served as a powerful reminder that authentic leadership leaves a lasting impact.

Thank you to our incredible speakers, sponsors, volunteers, and everyone who joined us to make this event such a success. Your enthusiasm, openness, and willingness to connect created an atmosphere that was both inspiring and incredibly fun.

For more photos, [click here!](#)





# Leading and THRIVING with Brain Health in Mind™

## A monthly THRIVE Series

By Dr. Stephanie Peabody, Neuropsychologist  
Founding Director, Brain Health Initiative

Science-informed strategies to help women protect brain health, optimize performance, and thrive at home, at work, and in their communities.

### **YOUR Brain Health MATTER™. YOUR Lifestyle Makes a Difference.**

One of the greatest privileges of my career has been helping people discover that brain health is about far more than preventing disease—it's about protecting the remarkable organ that allows us to think, learn, love, lead, create, care for others, and experience life itself. Even more hopeful, many aspects of brain health are within our influence, and it is never too early—or too late—to begin.

If you attended the THRIVE Summit, I hope one message stayed with you: Brain health IS women's health.

That simple idea has the power to change how we think about our health, our future, and the choices we make every day.

Your brain is your most valuable asset. It influences how you think, learn, lead, solve problems, manage stress, build relationships, care for others, and pursue your goals. It is the foundation of your resilience, emotional well-being, creativity, productivity, and quality of life.

Research shows that many of the factors influencing lifelong brain health are within our control:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Recovery and sleep
- Stress management
- Social connection
- Meaning and purpose
- Healthy environments
- Prevention and proactive healthcare

The goal isn't perfection.

The goal is progress—one small decision at a time.

One nourishing meal.  
One walk.  
One meaningful conversation.

These small decisions, repeated consistently over time, become powerful investments in the future health of our brains.

As women, this conversation is especially important. Throughout life, our brains are influenced by unique biological transitions—from puberty through menopause and healthy aging. We are also caregivers, professionals, leaders, partners, daughters, mothers, and friends who spend much of our lives caring for others.

My hope is that this monthly series encourages you to care for yourself with the same intention and compassion that you so generously extend to others.

When women protect their brain health, they strengthen far more than themselves. They strengthen the people, families, workplaces, and communities that depend on them.

Healthier brains build healthier women.  
Healthier families.  
Stronger workplaces.  
More resilient communities.  
A brighter future for the next generation.

### **Brain Health MATTER™ BOOST**

Take five minutes this week to reflect on one question:

What is one lifestyle habit that, if improved, could have the greatest positive impact on my brain health?

Choose one small step—and begin today.

YOUR Brain Health MATTER™. YOUR Lifestyle Makes a Difference.

### **Continue Your Brain Health Journey**

The newsletter introduces the conversation. The BrainSMART™ Lifestyle Companion helps you put it into practice.

#### **Ready to take the next step?**

**Scan the QR code below to continue your journey with the complete article, resources, and practical tools available through the BrainSMART™ Lifestyle Companion.**



Small, consistent lifestyle choices can make a meaningful difference. Start with one—and let the BrainSMART™ Lifestyle Companion help guide the way.

### **Coming Next Month!**

Leading and THRIVING with Brain Health in Mind Through Brain Fuel and Metabolism

Fuel your brain to fuel your life.

Discover how nutrition influences memory, mood, energy, resilience, and long-term brain health—and learn simple ways to nourish your brain every day.

### **A Brain Health Thought to Carry With You**

Your future brain is being shaped by the choices you make today. Choose one that your future self will thank you for.

**Protect. Optimize. Perform. THRIVE.**

# In Memorium Kathryn L. Nielson



It is heartbreaking to share that we lost one of our own Thrivers, Kathryn Nielsen, PhD on July 4, 2026. Kathryn battled ovarian cancer while working, enjoying her family that included four adult children and a loving partner, volunteering and simply lighting up life!

Kathryn had an exceptional career in higher education. For the past few years, she was a Senior Executive Officer at North Shore Community College. Her volunteer work was equally impressive as a Board Member of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, and THRIVE Advisory Council.

Just to give you an idea of how truly special Kathryn was.....here are a few things folks have said about her:



Some people enter our stories for a chapter and somehow change the ending. Kathryn was one of those people. I will always be grateful that she was part of mine.



Kathryn was a remarkable human being. She didn't just "take up space". She filled and embraced her realm, pushing beyond, and expanded the realm of those lucky enough to encounter her.



I am richer for the impact Kathryn had upon my life. Inspiring, super intelligent, and(sometimes) super goofy, empathetic, beautiful inside and out.

**Kathryn L. Nielsen, PhD**  
**June 17, 1964-July 4, 2026**  
**Rest in Peace**

# For Your Calendar

REGISTER on [www.northshorechamber.org](http://www.northshorechamber.org)

Join us as the Chamber celebrates outstanding women of influence and leadership in the region at the annual **Diamond Awards Breakfast** at the Salem Waterfront hotel on August 20!



The honorees are chosen for their commitment and passion for leading with purpose, empowering women, serving others and making an impact.



Don't miss the opportunity to hear from the North Shore's top municipal leaders at the **State of the Region Breakfast** on September 9! Local leaders will offer an overview of the projects they're pursuing, the issues facing their communities and the region, and their priorities for the season ahead.

## Small Business Council

Whether you are considering purchasing a business, planning for future growth, or preparing for an eventual sale, strategic planning is essential to maximizing long-term value. Join Michael McEntee, Managing Director of A. Neumann & Associates, for an informative workshop designed specifically for small business owners on **September 15!**



Have an idea for content for the THRIVE monthly newsletter? Please email **Kathleen Walsh** at [kwash@metronorthmca.org](mailto:kwash@metronorthmca.org).

Be sure to share this newsletter with your network, and encourage others to sign up for THRIVE! It's free!