

Book Discussion Guide Questions

ATHENA RISING

- AR** Question 1: Survey evidence reveals that many men are reluctant to engage in meaningful and public mentoring relationships with women. This reluctance has been exacerbated post-#MeToo. **What are some of the reasons you hear men give for avoiding mentoring relationships with women? If honest, what are your own reservations about engaging in an ongoing cross-gender mentoring relationship? What are some strategies men can employ to overcome anxiety about mentoring women?**
- AR** Question 2: Implicit biases about women, their capabilities, their career interests, and their leadership potential, often keep men from deliberately mentoring them. **Talk about some of the “everyday Athenas” you know with emphasis on why they should be promoted to top leadership positions. How have you or other men gotten it wrong in the past by assuming what a woman would want or not want in her career without taking the time to discern her career dream?**
- AR** Question 3: Women often experience gendered barriers to inclusion and workplace advancement. **Describe some barriers you have observed (e.g., prove it again, maternal wall, double jeopardy) and how your awareness of these might improve your mentorship of women. If you’re a man, how can you approach mentorships with women with genuine cultural/gender humility? How might you ask about her experience?**
- AR** Question 4: Men are sometimes surprised to discover that reciprocal mentoring relationships with women (as mentor or mentee) provide them with a host of personal and professional benefits. **What are some things you have most appreciated about close friendships or mentorships with someone of another gender in the workplace? If you have been in a cross-gender mentorship, how has that experience made you more effective as a person and a professional?**
- AR** Question 5: Before beginning mentorships with women, it is wise for men to become self-aware regarding their own *Man Scripts*, those comfortable default patterns to enacting familiar male-female relationships (e.g., father-daughter, warrior/knight-maiden in distress) that may undermine her autonomy and the relationship. **What scripts or behavior patterns tend to define your relationships with another someone of another gender in the workplace? Could any of these scripts compromise the mentee’s development?**
- AR** Question 6: The interpersonal or relational elements to excellent cross-gender mentorship relate to how you show up as an effective reciprocal relationship partner. **What are some of the key interpersonal strategies for men mentoring women (e.g., listening, avoiding assumptions, affirmation)? Which of the interpersonal strategies do you need to work on?**
- AR** Question 7: The professional or career elements to cross-gender mentorship include all the career building and networking/sponsoring strategies designed to propel her career forward. **What are some of the key career strategies for men mentoring women (e.g., inclusion in key meetings, public sponsorship, challenge)? How many women are you “loudly” sponsoring? Name one talented woman you could recommend for a stretch assignment (she may not have the experience but she certainly has the talent to do the job).**
- AR** Question 8: During the 2020-21 pandemic, women are leaving (or being forced out) of the job market at staggering rates. **What steps can you take to continue mentoring or initiate a mentoring conversation with a talented junior woman who might be working remotely? How can you show up as both an interpersonal supporter and a career sponsor, even if you don’t see your “mentee” routinely?**
- AR** Question 9: At times, men are uncertain about how to initiate a mentoring conversation with a high-talent junior woman. In other words, they aren’t sure how to “break the ice.” **With a female peer or colleague, practice initiating a contextualized mentoring conversation. Hint: “I’d like to mentor you” is not a good way to begin. Ask for feedback about how your offer lands.**
- AR** Question 10: The final chapter focuses on what not to do in cross-gender mentorships. **In your view, and in your own experience, what are some of the most common ways men shoot themselves in the foot when it comes to generating rumors, making a female mentee uncomfortable, or otherwise undermining a potentially useful mentorship?**
- AR** *What’s the first action you will implement today?*