

## HOW TO EMBRACE YOUR FEMININE STRENGTHS

It's time to celebrate how far we've come in addressing the unequal balance of power between men and women and focus on the great task that still lies ahead – by channelling our feminine qualities.

On 9 August 1956, over 20 000 women marched peacefully to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest oppressive apartheid laws. Those women played a crucial role in changing our country for the better. Today, Women's Day is observed annually in South Africa on 9 August as an opportunity to focus on how we can fight against sexism, racism, ageism, ableism and other forms of oppression.

### FEMALE FIGHTERS



While we've come a long way, the idea has taken root that *feminism* (the movement fighting for gender equality) somehow means you cannot also be *feminine*. It's as if we are afraid that if we don't focus on our fierce, assertive, ambitious side (traditionally associated with masculinity), we're not making progress.

But so-called feminine traits like co-operation, caring, warmth, affection, empathy, fairness, collaboration and inclusivity are crucial to our ability to survive and thrive. These traits are not signs of weakness; they are among our greatest strengths as human beings and the qualities that enable a truly egalitarian society.

Indeed, powerful women like former Public Protector Professor Thuli Madonsela, supreme court judge Elizabeth Baartman, activist Dr Mamphela Ramphele and late activist Helen Suzman have all effected enormous change within our country without sacrificing their femininity in the process.

### FLAUNT YOUR FEMININE POWER

Instead of holding back your feminine side, try making it part of your working style. The ability to show compassion, exhibit emotion and co-operate harmoniously are just as important in the business world as in the personal sphere. Here's how you can start recognising and celebrating your feminine strengths.

#### Connect with nature

Nature reminds us of the cycles of life – something with which women are intimately familiar. Seeing growth, beauty and creation played out before us reminds us of the feminine in all things. Walk barefoot, lie under a tree, grow your own herbs – anything that gets you in touch with (you guessed it) Mother Earth.

#### Find what femininity means to you

Spend time reflecting on feminine traits that make up who you are (known as self-concept), and how they are considered to be strengths.

#### Rewrite the script

Don't be dissuaded when others dismiss feminine qualities as being too homely or not suited to the office. Often, it's just a case of reframing these characteristics to remind you of their worth. Caregiving is all about providing essential support, empathy breaks down barriers to improve collaboration and intuition is subconscious interpretation of non-verbal communication. Who wouldn't want these skills at work?

#### Find inspiration

*Imbokodo: Women who shape us* is a ground-breaking series of books by Xolisa Guzula and Athambile Masola which introduces you to the powerful stories of South African women who have all made their mark and cleared a path for women and girls.

These powerful, overlooked traits are part of us all. When women celebrate the powerful essence of genuine femininity, we can take control of our lives and change those around us for the better.

Momentum Metropolitan is a proud supporter of women's unstoppable success. Check out the Momentum #SheOwnsHerSuccess campaign to start building your success and owning your story with pride.

#### References

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