

26 May 2021

Assertiveness, Influencing Skills
& Conflict Management for Women

The Ambitious Woman

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Agenda

- Case study: Ruth Bader Ginsburg
- Five questions
 1. What does ambition mean in the 21st century?
 2. Are women and men ambitious in different ways?
 3. Do we judge an ambitious woman differently from an ambitious man?
 4. How do we overcome obstacles and challenges?
 5. How do we identify and collaborate with other ambitious women?

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

“My mother told me to be a lady. And for her, that meant be your own person, be independent.”

1. Know your value and purpose

Ask yourself how do I add value to my organisation and society?
Do I have a purpose that motivates me to be my best self?

2. Accept no excuses

What obstacles do you currently face in your career?
Do you let these obstacles become barriers to your success
or do you look for avenues to overcome them?

3. Own your ambition

Many women, however, struggle to embrace their talent and ambition. Their negative mindset about ambition is that it's self-serving, ego-driven, and competitive, and they're not comfortable with it. These beliefs create an internal conflict and result in an ambivalence about ambition, especially as we struggle with the balance of motherhood and career.



(Source: Steve Petteway)

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

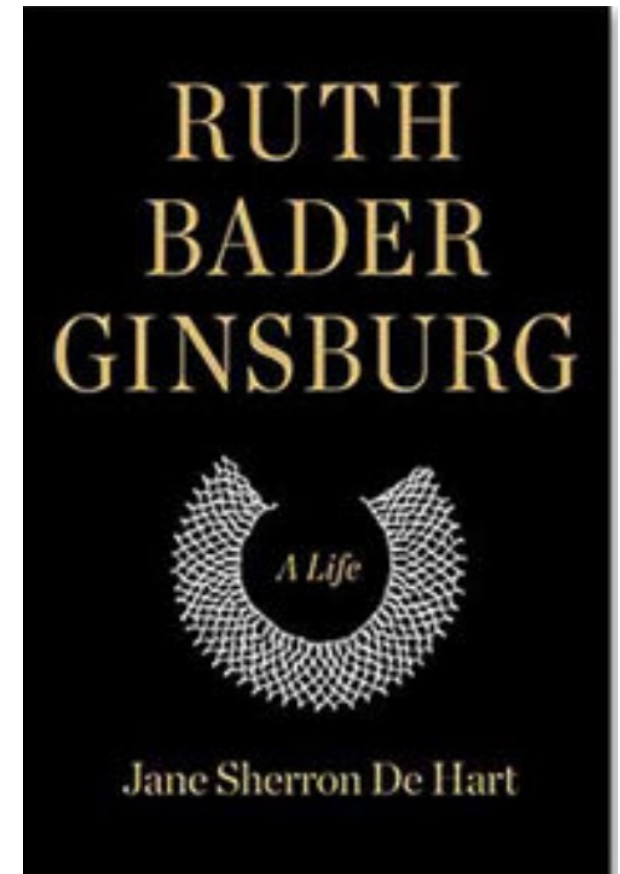
“Ruth is basically a reserved person, quiet but with steely determination. When she sets her mind to do something, she does it and superbly.” – [Columbia Law School Professor Smit \(page 86\)](#)

“Not a law firm in the entire city of New York would employ me,” she once said. “I struck out on three grounds: I was Jewish, a woman and a mother.” [\(page 79\)](#)

“Ruthless Ruthie” and “Bitch” – she responded “Better Bitch than Mouse”. [\(page 58\)](#)

“She had the academic credentials, the ability, and, above all, the ambition – that essential ‘fire in the belly.’” – [Professor Norman Dorsen \(page 134\)](#)

“Even more effectively hidden was her ambition, a trait admired in men but considered so inappropriate in women at the time that most female professionals worked hard to keep it invisible.” [\(page 124\)](#)



(Source: Jane Sherron De Hart)

1. What does ambition mean
in the 21st century?

1 (i). Definition of ambitious

The following definition was sourced from Merriam-Webster

Ambitious *adjective*

1a: having or controlled by ambition: having a desire to be successful, powerful, or famous

b: having a desire to achieve a particular goal

Synonyms & antonyms for ambitious

Synonyms: aspiring, go-getting, hard-driving, pushing, self-seeking

Antonyms: ambitionless, unambitious

First known use of ambitious

14th century, in the meaning defined at sense 1a.

History and etymology for ambitious

Middle English ambicious "overweening, craving," borrowed from Middle French & Latin; Middle French ambicieus "striving for success, seeking glory," borrowed from Latin ambitiosus "anxious to win favor, eager for advancement," from ambitio "act of soliciting for votes, desire for advancement".

1 (ii). The ambitious woman or the woman is ambitious

Noted for her precisely worded decisions on the Supreme Court, Ginsburg acknowledged Nabokov's influence on her own writing.

“[Nabokov] was a man in love with the sound of words,” he taught her the importance of choosing the correct word and word order.

Nabokov's first languages were French and Russian; English was his third. He said that he liked the English language because the word order was correct: “If a speaker wants to say ‘white horse,’ you say ‘white horse’.” This means you see the white before horse, so when you get to the horse, it is already white.

“In French you say, ‘cheval blanc,’ but you think brown horse first and you have to convert it.”

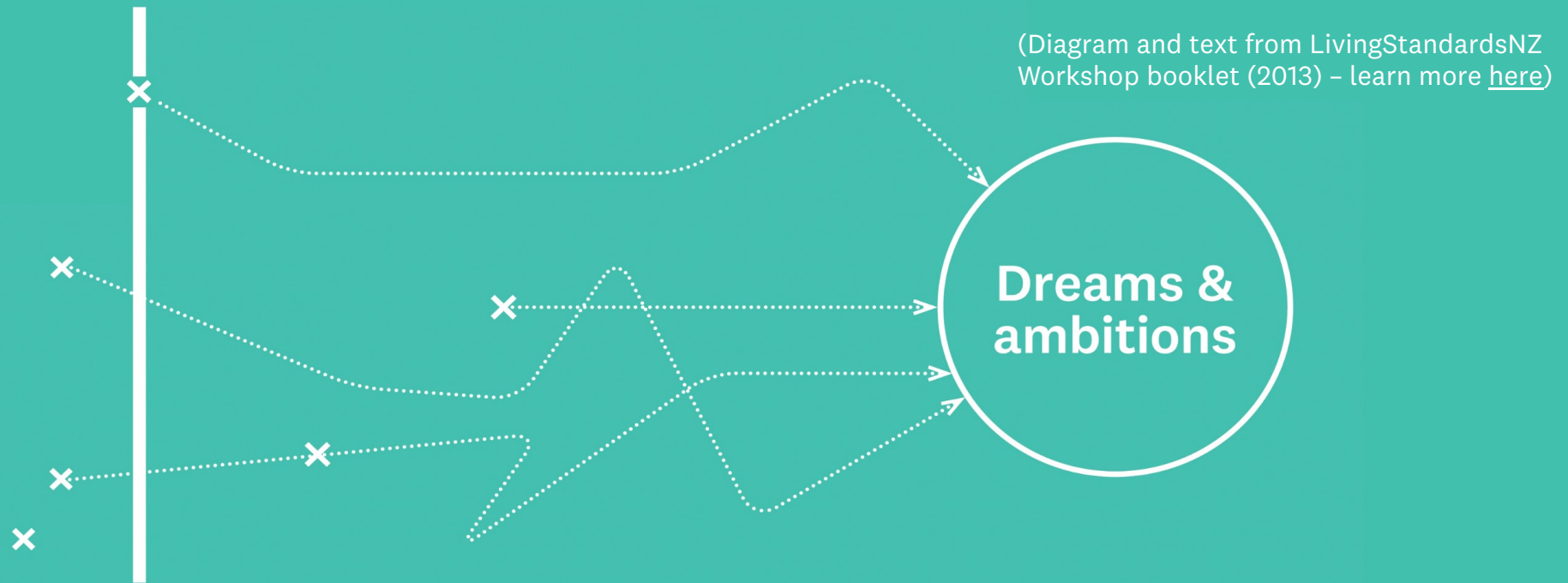


**2. Are women and men ambitious
in different ways?**

3. Do we judge an ambitious woman differently from an ambitious man?

**4. How do we overcome
obstacles and challenges?**

4 (i). Connect to your ambition



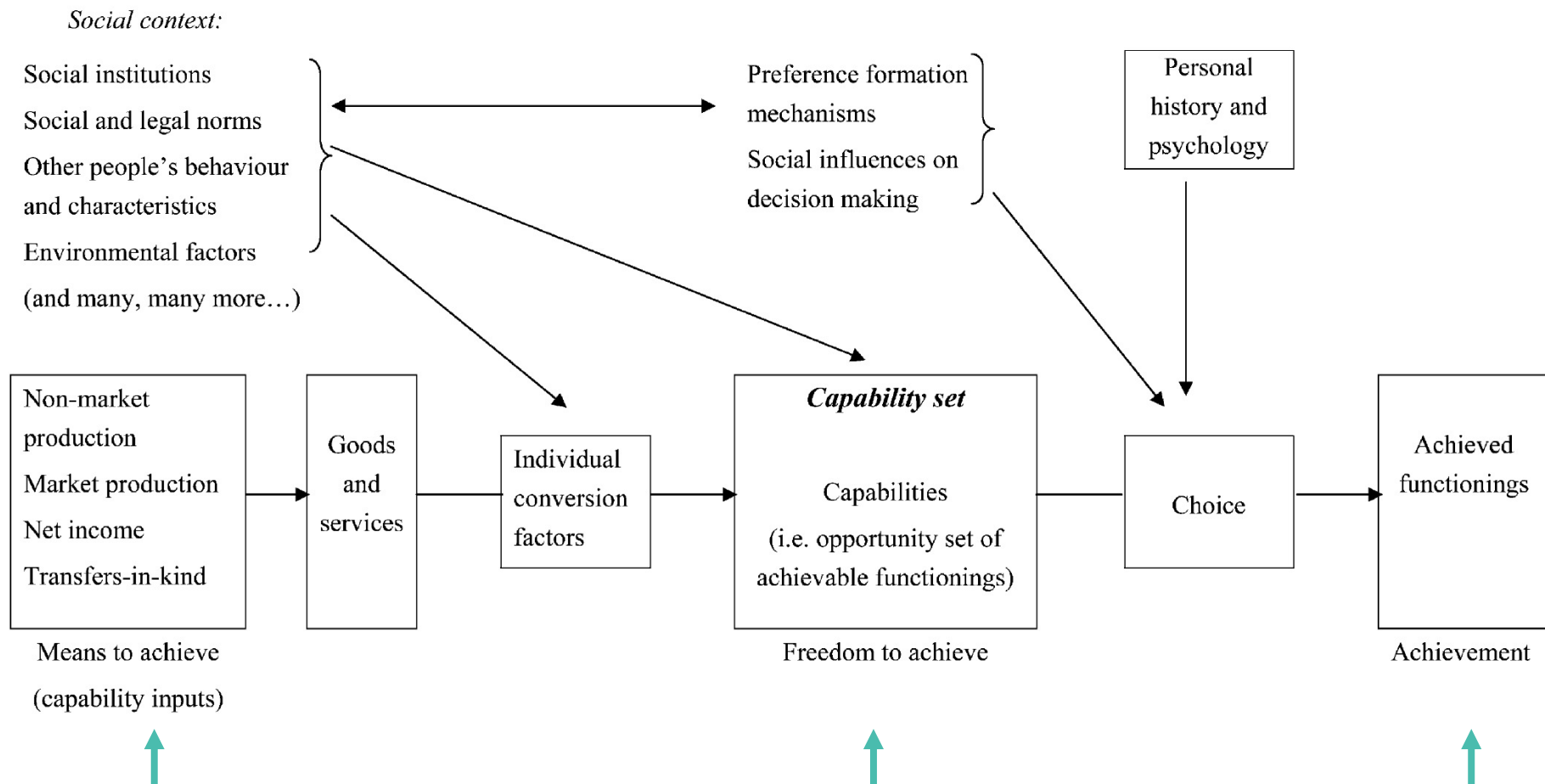
“Our concern is that not everyone starts at the starting line together. We believe it is critical that public policy is not measured in terms of equality (an input focus) but of equity (an outcome focus). This is illustrated in the diagram above, **with crosses representing a range of starting positions and the ‘dreams and ambitions’** representing the ultimate goal. The vertical line represents the current starting point for most New Zealanders. However, some start ahead of the line, due to being born into wealth and status where education and connections provide an insider advantage.

Others start behind the line, as a result of poverty, poor health or conflict, which in turn limits resources and options. In other words, even if two people undertake a similar journey to achieve comparable dreams and ambitions, one is likely to be significantly more advantaged than the other (demonstrated by the dotted line with two crosses). **The cross on the bottom without the dotted line symbolises the most disadvantaged; those that cannot see a path ahead, as they are so busy surviving, they do not even realise there is a race being run.”**

4 (ii). Make sure you have the ‘means to achieve’ and the ‘freedom to achieve’

‘The capability approach’

A stylized, non-dynamic representation of a person’s capability set and her social and personal context



(Source: Ingrid Robeyns, ‘The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey’ (2005))

4 (iii). Take a long-term view



Six drivers of short-termism

Tyranny of the clock

The acceleration of time since the middle ages

Digital distraction

The hijacking of attention by technology

Political presentism

Myopic focus on the next election

Speculative capitalism

Volatile boom-bust financial markets

Networked uncertainty

The rise of global risk and contagion

Perpetual progress

The pursuit of endless economic growth



Six ways to think long

Deep-time humility

Grasp we are an eyeblink in cosmic time

Legacy mindset

Be remembered well by posterity

Intergenerational justice

Consider the seventh generation ahead

Cathedral thinking

Plan projects beyond a human lifetime

Holistic forecasting

Envision multiple pathways for civilisation

Transcendent goal

Strive for one-planet thriving

4 (iv). Find your GRIT

“Never give in — never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense.

Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

– Sir Winston Churchill

4 (v). Know your internal buttons

Three Buttons:

'Red' is your panic button

'Yellow' is your pause button

'Green' is your go-hard button



Your advantage:

You choose if and when to push a button!

- You can think about pushing a button, you can prepare to push a button – but you don't need to tell anyone you are planning to push a button.
- You have a choice about what button to push, when to push it and what to do once you push it. Make the most of this time to think about implications, gather intelligence/resources and plan your next steps.
- Discretion and timing are critical to surviving tough times!

4 (vi). Know when to be humble

A: When you make a mistake;

Own it – apologise fast and say it won't happen again. A good colleague will accept your apology and move on.

B: When others make a mistake;

Never take credit for someone else's work (even though it can be tempting). Never talk behind someone's back unless it is for the greater good (which is very rare). Talk to them or don't talk at all.

C: Be a fair and a loyal team player;

Think ecosystem; the stronger the ecosystem the better chance of success.



4 (vii). Get your house in order

Ambitious women need to ensure their paperwork is easy to access and that they and their loved ones are safe – so they are free to fly.

A: Keep your personal records in order:

- Make sure you know where all birth & death certificates, wills, ownership papers, and other important documents are.
- Keep passwords secure.
- Have a good working arrangement with bank, insurance companies etc.

B: Be safe and healthy:

Undertake a regular first aid course and a self defence course - and keep fit. Have a regular GP. Make sure you lock your house every night and that windows are locked.

C: Be a role model to your children:

Act as you want them to act! Make sure they learn about the world (the good, the bad and the ugly) and teach them how to seek help and skills when they need (by doing this yourself).



5. How do we identify and collaborate with other ambitious women?

5 (i). Know your colleagues

A: Watch and observe

I always say that entering a new workplace is like entering a hot bath. Check the temperature and try not to make any splashes as you enter the bath.



Ask yourself:

Who has the gravitas? Who can be trusted? Who is the d**k? Who is a social psychopath?

It is great to have friends at work, but even better to have colleagues you trust and respect (that means you need to be fast to show respect but slow to trust). Watch and observe the behavior of your work colleagues.

B: Exit with grace and style.

Just like entering the bath, you want to leave without making any splashes. Don't give your enemies any ammunition.

C: Be compassionate (not empathetic).

D: Be curious, up-beat and fun.

Life is short and life is long. You want to live every day as though it is your last and live every day like you will live forever. Enjoy the journey.

5 (i). Know your colleagues cont.

E: The 85% rule

- 5% of people look bad and are bad.
- 5% of people look bad but are good.
- 5% of people look good and are bad.
- 85% of people look good and are good.

The risk is the 5% that look good but are bad, and the opportunity is the 5% that look bad but are good. But even the 85% stuff up, especially when stressed or busy. We are human after all, and that is why we need to try and forgive when people cause harm unintentionally.

If appropriate, you can explain to them (and only them) how they made you or others feel (so they learn) – but that is only if you care enough about them. Sometimes it is best to make a note to self and move on.

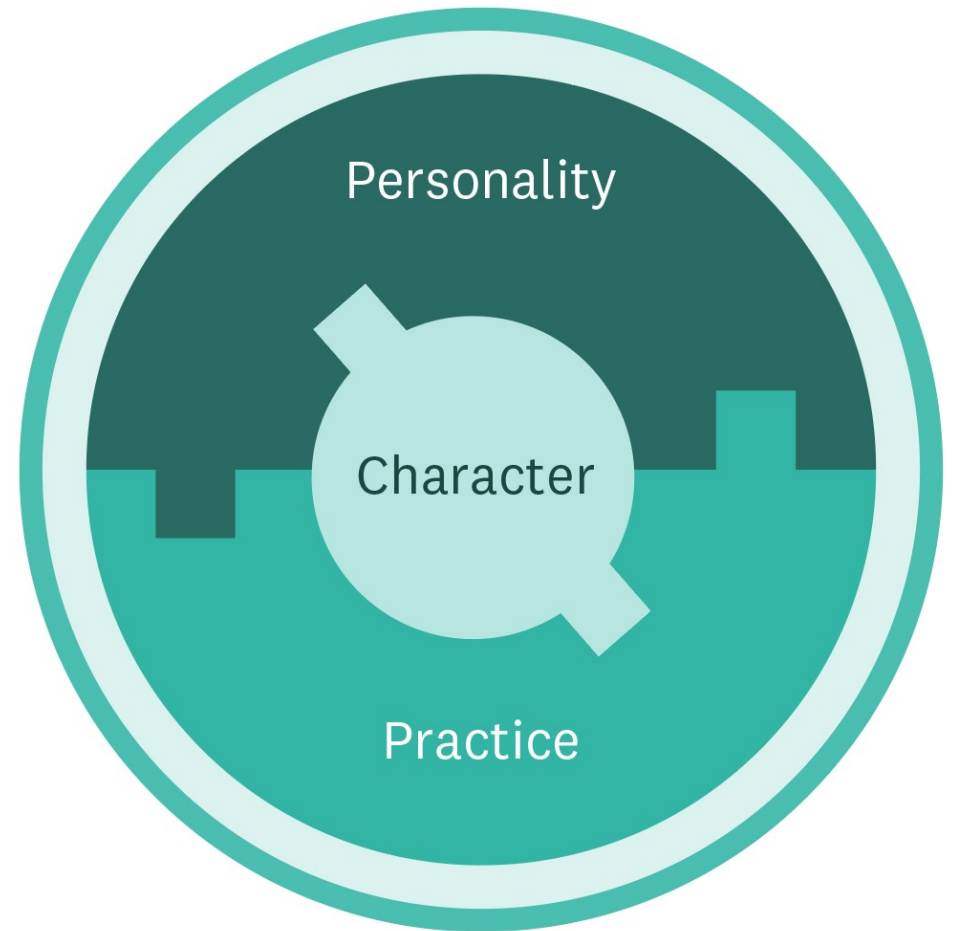


5 (i). Know your colleagues cont.

F: Character is key

- Personality is what you wake up with and is with you all day.
- Good character is what you need to work at all day every day.
- Practice (skills) is what you seek out to learn during the day.

- Hire on personality and skills, fire on character.
- Marry on personality and looks, divorce on character.
- Become friends on personality, unfriend on character.



5 (ii). Getting to know each other

It is important to understand how you like to work and learn more about how others like to work. To this end the Institute created a worksheet to do just that find it. In terms of personality, the questionnaire asks you to determine which type of bird best illustrates your natural way of operating in a group. See excerpt below:

SECTION ONE: PERSONALITY

The things we cannot change

A. The way you work



(Nigel Brown, *A picture of three wild birds that share the landscape at the bottom of the South Island*, 2001)

1. Which wild bird best represents the way you operate in a group?

A: Kārearea (Falcon)

– energetic, hungry, sometimes forceful

B: Kererū (Wood pigeon)

– calm, relaxed, sometimes lazy

C: Ruru (Morepork)

– alert, can turn its head 270 degrees, sometimes inconspicuous

2. If the wild bird inside you could cry out, what would it say?

“Ambition is a fundamental – and neutral – human drive. It can lead us anywhere: to greatness, to ruin, or to a quiet happy life – depending on how and where we direct it.”

– Julie Fry and Hayden Glass

Last Words

Be ambitious for yourself, your children,
your partner, your family, your friends,
your organisation, your community,
your city, your country, and our world.

To be ambitious is to be hopeful.

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Thank you

Ngā mihi nui