ALLYSHIP IN ACTION:

WHAT TRUE CHAMPIONS OF WOMEN LOOK LIKE

If you asked me what the single highest-impact investment I have seen leaders make in this time, it is not a new technology. It is not a better framework or methodology.

It is learning how to read a room, sit with someone in their discomfort, and ask a better question.

That is the most useful form of emotional intelligence. Not a soft skill that makes your LinkedIn profile look good. A precise tool that changes the quality of every conversation, every team dynamic, and every important decision you make when you are under a lot of stress.

One of the most telling data points on emotional intelligence in leadership comes from a nationally representative survey by Promundo-US (2019) of 1,201 working adults, which found that 77% of men believe they are doing "everything they can" to support gender equality in the workplace, while only 41% of women agree.

There is no disagreement about the 36-point gap. It is a gap in emotional attunement, which means not really hearing and understanding what the people beside us are going through. Most men genuinely believe they are supportive partners. Most of us believe we are sharing the load fairly. But research consistently shows that women take on a disproportionate share of invisible labour: the mental load of managing family schedules, the emotional labour of maintaining relationships, and the administrative weight of running a household.

Babcock et al. (2017), in a study published in the American Economic Review, documented a similar pattern in workplaces: women are significantly more likely than men to volunteer for non-promotable, invisible tasks in mixed-gender groups.

This is not about pointing fingers. It is about awareness. And awareness is precisely the gap emotional intelligence can close when it is practiced consistently.

EI-driven allyship does not require grand gestures. It shows up in four small, consistent behaviours:

1 Credit ideas publicly

When a colleague's point goes unattributed in the room, say it plainly: "That was Joyce's point, I want to make sure we give her credit." Four seconds. Enormous impact. At home: when your partner carries something without complaint, name it. "I see how much you're holding right now. Thank you." Both take seconds. Both shift everything.

2 Redirect the silence

Instead of filling every room with your own voice, try: "I'd like to hear from Joyce before I weigh in." This shifts who carries authority in the conversation. At home, try simply waiting after you ask a question. Let there be a pause. What comes next is usually what actually matters.

3 Check how you assign tasks

Who takes the meeting notes? Who organises the team events? Who is going to do the chores around the house? If the pattern goes in one direction, name it and change it. Patterns do not correct themselves. They require attention.

4 Speak up before it becomes a crisis

Research from Catalyst's MARC (Mutual Accountability, Real Change) initiative found that only 31% of men felt confident interrupting problematic behaviors in the workplace before the program, while 74% of MARC alumni said they were more likely to intervene afterward (Catalyst, n.d.). The shift was not in values. It was in having the scripts. The same is true at home. Knowing how to say "I've noticed things feel distant between us lately, can we talk?" before it becomes a rupture is a skill. It requires courage, but it is learnable.

Whether we are talking about burnout, team leadership, or the quieter tensions of a relationship, the same question sits underneath all of it:

"If you treated yourself and others with genuine kindness today, what would that look like?"

You do not have to change everything at once. This week, make one small, honest change.

At work: the next time someone on your team hesitates, ask what is underneath the hesitation before you offer the fix.
At home: the next time your partner or someone you love starts to share something, put down your phone, stop forming a response, and just listen until they are finished.

These are both small things. And if you do both, they change the quality of everything around you.

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