



## Make Decisions Despite Uncertainty

This week, Gloria takes another thoughtful look at the opportunities the COVID-19 pandemic and other unexpected situations present. By drawing from recent events in her own life and leadership, as well as other women leaders and companies that have managed to thrive the last few months, Gloria drives home the importance of “being able to live and lead with uncertainty and ambiguity.” Her analysis of current events makes clear how ambiguity offers space for you to innovate and breakthrough with your most powerful ambitions.

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Gloria Feldt: Like I always say, you will always be among the most successful people if you are able to lead and live despite uncertainty and ambiguity. Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I’m Gloria Feldt, cofounder and president of Take the Lead, and I’m here with secrets and tools to prepare and propel you with training and coaching to harness your incredible power to in your professional lives. I have spent my entire career advancing women’s rights and equality from the boardroom to the bedroom. I cofounded [Take the Lead](#) because I figured out how to crack the code that has been holding women back from equal leadership and pay, and my mission now is for women and men to hold equal power, pay, and leadership positions by 2025.

Last week, I launched a workshop series in partnership with the women’s business community, [Luminary](#), and I had the opportunity to co-teach it with Take the Lead leadership ambassador, [Surabhi Lal](#). Ironically, I joined Luminary last year because I wanted to have a place to work and to meet people other than my spare bedroom. The Midtown Manhattan location was perfect. It was close enough by subway for me to zip over for a quickly scheduled meeting, far enough for a vigorous walk in nice weather if I had time. I liked the ambiance. Plus, every time I went there, I saw people I either had worked with or would like to work with. It’s the kind of place where collaborations are made, ideas hatched, and friendships strengthened. Besides, there’s wine on tap, and Pilates lessons that I never got to take part in, because... Well, pandemic.

I have left wintery New York and returned to sunny Arizona in late February, because we, Take the Lead, that is, were hosting the inaugural [Power Up Conference in Scottsdale, February 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>](#). I had made a big point to my team that we absolutely had to hold a conference on leap day, because that has historically been the most feminist of days on the calendar. The one day every four years when traditionally women could break with tradition and do such a thing as ask a man to marry them, as opposed to the other way around. I know, it’s weird, but I’m kind of nerdy about these kinds of symbols. And I got some

pushback from my team, but we managed to pull it off. It turned out that was a really good thing, because literally the week after that leap day event, the doors to such events slammed shut.

Among other extraordinary speakers at the conference, we did have the opportunity to hear the mayors of two major Arizona cities, [Coral Evans of Flagstaff](#) and [Kate Gallego of Phoenix](#). Both women hold elected roles where women are in the minority. In the 50 largest United States cities, women hold only 30% of the mayoral positions. And in fact, Gallego is one of only two female mayors of the top 12 cities. [Lori Lightfoot of Chicago](#) is the other one. But what struck me was how both of these women spoke about the importance of stepping up and taking the lead, even when it's hard. And the responsibility they have to make decisions in spite of uncertainty, to determine the best course of action in unclear or ambiguous circumstances. You can catch a glimpse of these two up and coming leaders in a [highlights video from the conference](#) that I will post in the show notes.

There are problems and there are predicaments. Problems have solutions. Predicaments are more ambiguous. They rarely have clear right or wrong solutions, but rather have choices between two or more imperfect courses of action. Where I was headed with this was to say that coronavirus hell broke loose right after the conference, and within a week afterward travel had almost stopped, cities and states started requiring people to shelter in place, and all but the most necessary businesses closed their doors. [Zoom stock zoomed](#), as we all learned how much of the work could and did continue virtually. But [many people lost jobs](#) and many [parents learned just how essential teachers are](#).

Which brings me back to being able to live and lead with uncertainty and ambiguity. Now, Luminary's only physical location is in New York. I was in Arizona. But [Luminary's founder, Cate Luzio](#), quickly pivoted to virtual programming, and she overcommunicated with members via a constant flow of newsletters to keep the community together, and now she has members all over the country and all over the world, not just in New York. And then what happened, when Surabhi and I were so rudely interrupted in our plans for these workshops, is that we realized after a few conversations that our three workshops, we had reprioritized the topics to start with the suddenly super-salient carpe the chaos, could be made available to anyone, anywhere.

In what seemed like uncertainty about whether we could even deliver the workshops, we managed to rise up to the potential to serve many more people than we had anticipated, because now it didn't matter whether our participants were in the New York area or anywhere in the world. Similarly, I had been lackadaisically aiming to update my classic online course, [Nine Leadership Power Tools](#) to Accelerate Your Career, sometime this year. I knew, when we were so rudely interrupted, that we had to accelerate our intentions and get that course ready to launch by June, when so many women will be needing a boost to their careers as we reenter workplaces that are forever changed, or realize we need to

retool our skills for an economy still reeling with ambiguity about its current, let alone its future shape.

I realized that we had the [classic blue ocean strategy](#) opportunity, because as a totally virtual organization, Take the Lead had been delivering online training and coaching for years, and that allowed us to step out from the competition that was scurrying to develop online leadership training with a product that has already been shown to have powerful results for women's career advancement. We just needed to take it up a notch and relaunch the course in an up to date version that acknowledges the reality of today's marketplace, including pricing it affordably, while providing value above expectations.

The reality is that those who are best prepared, with the mindset that allows them not to be frozen by swirling uncertainty, but rather to live comfortably with the space that ambiguity offers to let us innovate, those are the people that will always be the most successful. I hope that's you, because that is exactly why in my leadership training and coaching I focus more on helping people stretch their abilities to think creatively, to problem solve, to know the value they bring, regardless of situation, and to take on those predicaments with creativity, courage, and action.

We will either rise like the phoenix from this pandemic and create a better society, or we will shrink into our fears. It all depends on leadership, and I cannot overstate that we are all the leaders from wherever we sit. In our personal lives, in our businesses or professions, in our communities. [The 19<sup>th</sup> century writer, Mary Shelley](#), who's best known for her novel, Frankenstein, observed that, "Intention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos."

So, here are three questions I want you to answer to make thriving in uncertainty and ambiguity work for you. First, make a list of businesses that are growing now, in spite of or maybe because of the pandemic. Where are the blue oceans? Here are some examples to get you started, but I'll bet you think of lots more as soon as you get going: [Zoom](#), AI technology, online learning, business consulting, healthcare law, online exercise programs, from expensive [Peloton](#) exercise equipment to low cost workouts, pharmaceuticals and biotech, masks and PPE. I just heard today about a friend who is a custom tailor. Well, people aren't buying his custom clothes right now, and he can't go measure them, so what's he doing? He's making masks and selling them. What else can you think of? Keep your list going for a little while and then I want you to put a star by any that you are interested in exploring for yourself.

Second, make a list of problems that people need to solve in this new predicament we find ourselves in, and then for each one, identify a way that you can help solve it, or that you can source a solution. Like for example, can you get me some paper dinner napkins and alcohol disinfectant wipes? I'll pay a good premium for that. Stephanie, who has been cutting my hair for several decades,

has been texting her clients to see if we need hair care or facial products, and she's either getting them drop shipped, or she's delivering them to us. I think the performing arts organizations that are smart are going to have so many more fans when this is over if they play their cards right, because thousands more people know about them now from their online performances. And I'm gonna tell you, I am waiting for somebody to invent a reasonably priced paid subscription that's kind of like Netflix for the arts.

I was driving across Phoenix a few days ago, looking at all the commercial buildings sitting mostly empty, and that made me wonder how many stores, and law firms, and other businesses will realize they don't need all that real estate to do their business. So, those are just a few of the possibilities that come to my mind. I know you can think of many more problems that people are going to need to solve.

Third, I want you to make a list of the things that are changing or that you expect will change in your particular field of work, and then for each one, start to journal your ideas to create the future that you want. "Don't skate to where the hockey puck is, skate to where it is going," famously said hockey star Wayne Gretzky. There is always the reordering after the chaos and disruption, and there is pain going through the reordering. You, and all of us, are on a heroine's journey of a sort. But there is less pain when you are choosing how the future will be reordered. Our grand plans for 2020 might have been rudely interrupted, but our next opportunities can spring from that disruption.

The future lies in the uncertainty. In the chaos, or what seems like it now. Embrace it. Embrace the ambiguity. The people who will be most successful will always be those who do. You are your own power source, as my friend Natalie says. The pandemic is a great leveler. If we're all in this together, then that means any one of us could become the next Oprah, or Bill Gates, or could discover the cure for COVID-19. How cool is that?

Until next week, Power to You.

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