



After a Crisis, Normalize Something Better

In this heartfelt episode, Gloria helps us take a breath amid the global crisis and consider the possibilities if we only refocus our energy. “We’re in the season of rebirth. We’re in the season of disruption. The two have much in common. What we think of as normal may never be again, but in this season of rebirth and disruption, we have an opportunity to normalize some new realities, to create a future more intentionally and proactively than we have ever done,” she tells us.

Gloria Feldt: Like I always say, there’s a difference between normal and normalization. Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I’m Gloria Feldt. I’ve spent my entire career advancing women’s rights and equality from the boardroom to every room. On this show, I will share secrets and tools to harness your incredible power to in your personal and professional life.

Take a breath. We’re in the season of rebirth. We’re in the season of disruption. The two have much in common. What we think of as normal may never be again, but in this season of rebirth and disruption, we have an opportunity to normalize some new realities, to create a future more intentionally and proactively than we have ever done. Let’s take a moment first to honor the frontline workers who are saving lives. The nurses, and doctors, and other health care workers, those like the farm workers and the grocery store and restaurant workers who are feeding us, the postal service workers and others who bring us mail and packages, the teachers and parents who are educating kids, and so many who are putting their lives on the line for humanity. And let us take a moment to honor ourselves for doing what we need to do each and every day to keep ourselves going, to support friends and family, to maintain businesses. Everyone in my book is a hero or shero these days.

So, how can we normalize the values of kindness and mutual support as opposed to the rugged individualism, every-person-for-herself kind of belief system that underlies much of America’s social value system now? Perhaps it was functional in the early days of the country, though indigenous peoples would certainly see that differently. This season of rebirth, springtime on the calendar, holidays we celebrate this time of the year, Ramadan, Easter, Passover, the reappearance of colorful flowers on our walking paths and in our yards, the air beginning to warm, delicious strawberries, I appreciate all of the more than ever this year. The disruption of what has been normal life has made me more aware of the beauty of these simple things that I have always been able to rely upon. To take for granted, really.

I don't anymore. I am grateful for them every day. I am grateful when I find food on the shelves of the grocery store, and of course I'll be even more grateful when I can get paper towels and toilet paper routinely again. I am grateful for online exercise routines. I think I'll do a whole podcast on my favorites. They help me reduce stress, keep my energy high and maintain my health.

Now, everybody is saying that we'll have a new normal after the pandemic is over. But what does that mean? What does that mean to you? Was the old normal so good that we want to return to it? What parts of it do we want to retain? What other parts would we be better served to normalize in a new or different way? Let's ponder the question together. What do we want to normalize? What do we want to make the new normal to be in a year, five years, 20 years?

[Novelist Arundhati Roy says](#), "Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smokey skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world and ready to fight for it." Life is hard for many people right now. Maybe, probably for you. Hardships can destroy or generate, and usually they do both at the same time. It's the sand in the oyster that creates the pearl. It's the most intense pressure that creates the most perfect diamond.

Nick Wiseman, owner of two restaurants in Washington, D.C., says, "We threw out our business plan because of COVID-19 and started over." [He's using the restaurant's kitchen](#) to serve the city's most vulnerable and keep people employed.

Three opportunities for rebirth and normalization that I've been thinking about are these: First of all, I just think that fundamental change in the healthcare system is likely to happen now as telemedicine is used more widely, reducing costs and accessibility. At the same time, [flaws in the global health care systems](#) have been laid bare for all to see on the news coming at us 24/7. Disparities of access to care are not merely a philosophical conversation about business models. They are a matter of life and death. Starkly put, if you are poor, and people of color are disproportionately poor due to systematic discrimination and racism, you are less likely to have good, basic health care, and far less likely to have access to the highest levels of technology and care if you are sick.

Secondly, you know those photos of clean air in cities like Los Angeles? Well, they lead me to believe that we could, if we choose, normalize clean air by investing stimulus money in electric cars and mass transit. I also believe that working at home at least part of the week for the majority of Americans will be normalized, reducing carbon emissions substantially and slowing climate change.

And thirdly, I believe that women's leadership can take quantum leaps toward parity. You might have seen [the meme circulating](#) with photos of six female

leaders of nations, and the caption, “What do countries with the best coronavirus responses have in common? Women leaders.” In times of great disruption and change, people are open to new ways of solving problems, and nothing could be newer than gender parity in leadership across the board. [That’s Take the Lead’s commitment](#), and that’s exactly what we intend to normalize.

The question I put to you is simply will we rise from the ashes like the phoenix, inspired and victorious and better than ever over the past horror? Or will we choose the path of destruction and devastation and separateness, red in tooth and claw? Will we opt for the old oppressive power overworld exemplified by narratives of war and fighting each other for finite resources? Or are we going to make a paradigm shift to the innovative, creative, generative, infinitely resourced power-to model of thinking, where we humans realize there is no finite pie of love and human intelligence? A model that encourages us to find solutions to even the most intractable problems if we realize we are indeed #inthistgether.

What do you think? What do you want to make happen? So, instead of giving you advice, this week I am asking for yours. I want you to email me directly at powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com and let me know how it goes for you. I’d love to know your answers to these questions and I will respond. I will also share the composite results, without attribution, so you can feel free to say whatever you want, of the answers that I receive. First question, and these will be in the show notes, so you don’t have to write them down: What is your biggest fear personally about how the pandemic is impacting or will impact your own life? What is your biggest fear?

Second question: What is the greatest opportunity that you see for yourself as we come out of this difficult time? Question three: What path do you think the country or the world will take to a new normal, positive or negative? Question four: What is the one change you would most like to normalize? The one change you would like to normalize. And question five is anything else you want to say.

I look forward to hearing from you. How we choose to normalize the future is the most important conversation we can be having today. So, let me close with the wise words of Brené Brown. She says, “We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal, other than that we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate, and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.”

Till next time, Power to You.

Power to You is produced by Lantigua Williams & Co. Cedric Wilson is our sound designer. Emma Forbes is our assistant producer. For more about my work, please visit gloriafeldt.com, and follow me on social media @gloriafeldt. To learn about Take the Lead and our courses and coaching services, go to taketheleadwomen.com and follow us on social media, where you will find us

@takeleadwomen on Twitter and Instagram, and Take the Lead Women on Facebook and LinkedIn. You can also send me those comments about the show and questions on leadership and power to powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com. I might even use them on future episodes and if I do, I will just shout you out.

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