



# Katy Lindhart

## Writing Portfolio

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## **Services**

Content Writing

Blogs, Articles, and Op-Eds

Grant Writing

Copy Editing

Developmental Editing

## Ghostwriter - Blog/Article

Client: Women's leadership coach

### Lessons in women's advancement from college basketball

Progress often feels like it's two steps forward, one step back, doesn't it? Some days it feels more like 10 steps. Others, like we've entered a time machine.

Just a few weeks ago, seemingly the entire country had turned their attention to women's college basketball. All eyes were especially on [Caitlyn Clark](#), the Iowa Hawkeyes' 22-year old phenom. As a bit of a superfan, I was thrilled to see the [surge](#) in viewership for the women's NCAA Tournament Championship. Women's sports have often been sidelined (pun intended), and it was so refreshing to see little girls and boys celebrating these athletes in the same way they celebrate their male counterparts. It felt like progress. It still does.

Around the same time, I read a study that knocked the wind out of me. A [new report](#) from S&P Global Market Intelligence found that, for the first time in nearly 20 years, the amount of women in the C-Suite has fallen. In 2023, women held just 11.8% of the roughly 15,000 C-suite roles assessed, down from 12.2% the year before. And when it comes to other senior leadership positions, the numbers barely budged. The study indicates that waning focus on diversity and equity efforts may be a contributing factor to the drop.

On the surface, it may seem like these two bits of news are unrelated, but to me, they perfectly illustrate the whiplash that comes with being invested in women's futures. How could these two pieces of information exist in the same universe? Whenever we open our phones and see good news, bad news is just a few scrolls away. It's enough to make your head spin.



### No girls allowed

I've always loved basketball. As a young girl, I often played with my dad, brothers, and neighborhood boys—until the day I stopped being welcome. I remember it vividly. I bounded out of the house, only to be stopped and informed that they already had an even number. I wouldn't be able to play with them. I can still feel the heat from my flushed face, can still hear the uncomfortable silence that followed. Earlier in the day, I'd been warned that I'd "scratch the boys" with my long nails. So I'd cut them short, which I thought had solved the problem.

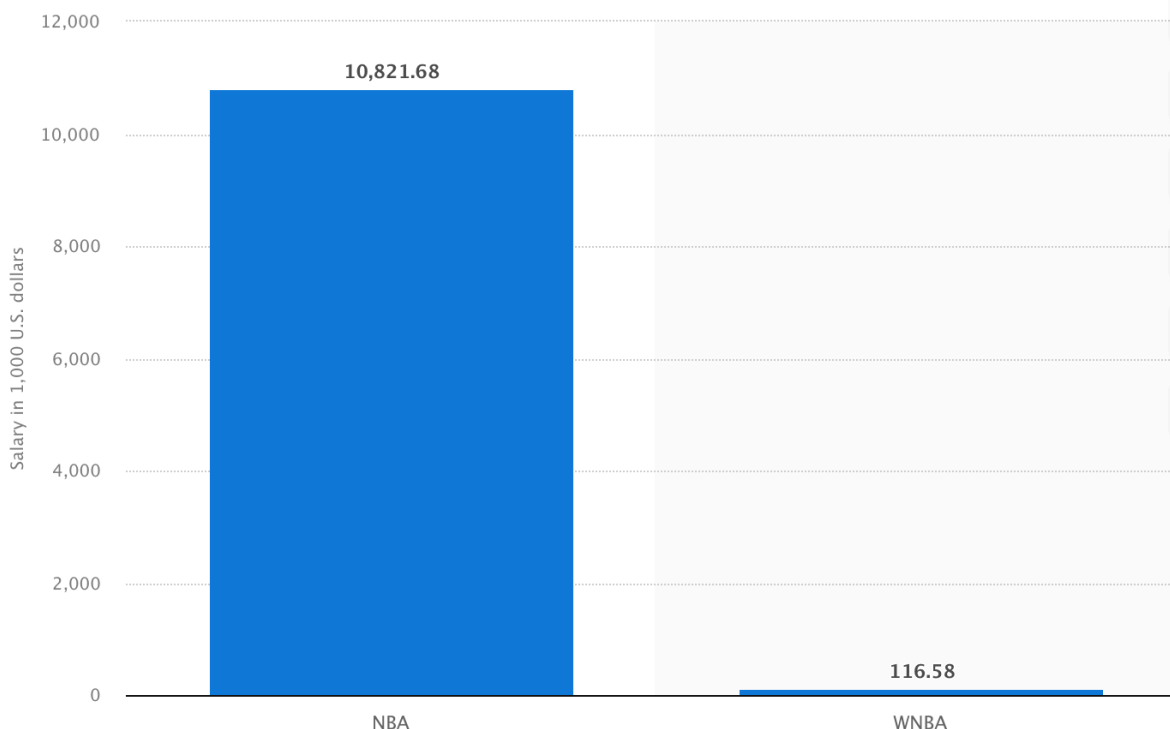
It hadn't. I stared into the wastebasket, now filled with the pink half moons of my fingernails. I was angry.

That day, I learned that even when girls or women follow the prescribed rules, we can still be locked out. With the advancements of Title IX, the law intended to equalize opportunities for girls, you are probably thinking we've moved beyond stories like this... But have we?

### Parallel experiences

As it is with so many things, what happens in popular culture often mirrors what happens in our world. I'm writing this on the eve of the WNBA draft, and I've been thinking a lot about the parallels I see between what's going on in the world of basketball and what I've experienced as a professional woman.

As it is in most professions, a wage gap exists between men and women. However, that gap between the NBA and WNBA is staggeringly high. In 2023, professional NBA players took home an [average](#) of over \$10 million, while those in the WNBA were paid an average of just \$116,500. [Statista's](#) chart (below) allows you to see just how Grand Canyon-sized that gap really is.



And even the women at the top of the pay scale are still woefully underpaid. The minimum salary for NBA players is \$1.2 million, over four times higher than the *highest*-paid women in the sport, who receive around \$242,000. Yes, there are factors like ad revenue to consider when we look at salaries for WNBA players, but the men making nearly 100 times what the women make seems almost cartoonish, doesn't it?

Much like their business counterparts, professional athletes also have to contend with the [double-bind](#) that comes with modern womanhood. When powerful women leaders [don't act like we're "supposed to."](#) which generally means that we display traditionally "masculine" traits like confidence or ambition, we're not "likable." Thankfully, Caitlin Clark has been [uplifted for her leadership](#), but many female athletes aren't as lucky. Angel Reese, the star of LSU, has been subjected to a year's worth of criticism. Just like [male players](#), and, in fact, [just like Clark](#), Reese has taunted her opponents. But she isn't celebrated in the same way they are. The swag-her Reese displays is frowned upon, and she has received criticism ranging from reproaches for "unladylike behavior" to racial slurs to threats of violence and death. Of course, Reese isn't just a woman, she's a Black woman, a factor which cannot be ignored. On the basketball court and in the office, women of color are often held to [a different standard of behavior](#), a bias that makes it much more difficult for them to rise professionally.



With all this in front of us, how do we keep moving forward?

### Envisioning what can be

The frustrating truth is that progress isn't linear. Years of “two steps forward, one step back” can leave us waiting for the other shoe to drop, but don't let how far we still have to go keep you from celebrating how far we've come.

Women's sports have long been portrayed as “less than” by many fans. Caitlin Clark herself even [appeared on Saturday Night Live](#) over the weekend, giving Michael Che and SNL writers a (deserved) ribbing for their jokes at the expense of female athletes. **But look at what just happened.** The [18.1 million-person audience](#) for this year's NCAA national championship was up 90% over the 2023 national championship, and up 289% from 2022's viewership. A search of the 2024 WNBA draft leads to thousands of news stories, in sharp contrast to previous years.

That's *real* progress, and we forget that at the expense of our own wellbeing.

When women unite, we are incredibly powerful. As a team, we win tournaments, we change organizations, we decide elections, we shape policies. We uplift each other, as Angel Reese's teammates, Fla'jae Johnson and Hailey Van Lith, did in a [recent press conference](#). When setbacks occur—at work, at home, or on the court—keep your eye on the prize, and let the downsides fuel you. Remember that even after a step back, we are still moving forward.

There is darkness before the light, but don't let it eclipse all the good that is to come.

### Interview/Article

Assignment: Interview about allergy season with Dr. Paul Kwak, published in Classical Singer Magazine in June 2024

## Nipping Seasonal Allergies in the Bud with Dr. Paul Kwak

Spring is here, and with the warmer weather and new blossoms comes something that strikes fear into the heart of any singer: seasonal allergies. The upper respiratory symptoms that often accompany allergy season - stuffy nose, post-nasal drip, coughing, sore throat, and more - can make singing difficult, if not downright impossible. I don't know a single singer who doesn't have an arsenal of remedies, both traditional and homeopathic, but treating seasonal allergies can make you feel like you're trying to hit a moving target.

To help understand how allergies affect us, I sat down with Dr. Paul Kwak, ENT-otolaryngologist at NYU Langone's Voice Center. Dr. Kwak has dedicated much of his work to helping singers - in more way than one! He has a master's degree in collaborative piano from The Juilliard School, where he studied vocal accompanying and opera coaching. It was working with opera singers that inspired him to pursue otolaryngology, merging his interest in medicine with his passion for the human voice. His compassionate, expert care has led to collaborations with The Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and The Juilliard School, and he has helped thousands of singers (including this writer!) improve and maintain their vocal health.

There's a reason Dr. Kwak is so in-demand: he *gets us*. He generously took time out of his packed schedule to share his tips for surviving allergy season with your voice (and your sanity) intact.

### **Spring has a (deserved) reputation for being "allergy season." What kinds of complaints do bring singers into your office this time of year?**

Spring does have a reputation for being allergy season, but with significant climate change, the "season" is starting earlier each year, and lasting longer each year - much to the chagrin of all who suffer from allergies. Allergies can cause all manner of symptoms in the nose and throat; perhaps the most common one that afflicts singers can be post-nasal drip. People experience this differently; often people feel a drip down the back of the throat. Sometimes it manifests in increased throat clearing. Allergies can also increase the feeling that something is "stuck" in the throat (called "globus sensation").

### **I think it can be easy to dismiss allergy symptoms. What symptoms of allergies should we definitely *not* ignore?**

Certainly any kind of breathing issue that arises should be evaluated. When allergies are severe, they can induce bronchoconstriction, and it is important to treat that quickly and effectively (often with an inhaler and/or systemic medicines). I also think anytime a singer feels the voice is being compromised, it's worth coming in. It may not be that there is an actual issue with the vocal cords, but we can take a look to clarify that question and to figure out what else

might be causing the vocal issue. For instance, sometimes increased congestion in the nose can alter the vocal mechanics in a way that creates an issue with the voice, even if the vocal folds themselves are doing fine!

**The inner “is it allergies, a cold, the flu, or COVID?” debate is *real*. How can singers tell the difference?**

Generally, for lack of a better phrase, a cold or flu tends to make you feel sick in your whole body, whereas symptoms of allergies tend to be more localized. Respiratory viruses that cause what we refer to as the common cold, the flu, or COVID, typically manifest with some manner of fever, often body aches and chills, headaches, fatigue and malaise. Allergies can make you feel miserable, but in a somewhat different way. Classic symptoms are itchiness and runniness, whether in the nose or eyes, nasal congestion, and post-nasal drip – but they should not be associated with the systemic symptoms like fevers, chills, or fatigue.

**When we do experience allergy symptoms, what treatments do you recommend? And which should we stay away from?**

There are two main categories of treatment that I think about: oral (systemic) treatments, and nasal (topical) treatments. When you have multiple symptoms – itchy, watery eyes, plus nasal congestion, plus post-nasal drip, plus perhaps throat tightness/feeling of constriction – then I think an oral antihistamine can be very helpful because it helps generally blunt the body's histamine (allergic) response. These are commonly available, over-the-counter drugs like Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra, or Xyzal.

If the symptoms are primarily nasal, without much other systemic response, then sometimes a nasal steroid spray alone, like Flonase, Nasonex, or Rhinocort, can be helpful while avoiding some of the side effects of oral antihistamine. Often we use oral antihistamines and nasal steroid sprays together, so the treatment plan is really tailored to the singer's specific experience and symptoms. There are many additional medications in our armamentarium; but these are good starters!

Regarding homeopathic treatments, I tend to have no definitive opinion about them because they are so varied and unregulated. I'm not opposed to them, but I generally advise people to be careful because it is not always clear what strength/dosage of the particular component is in what you are receiving.

The only treatment that I have a specific recommendation about is nasal decongestant sprays with phenylephrine, often sold under the name Afrin. These can feel extremely effective when you use them to treat nasal congestion, but when they are used more than about 5-7 days consecutively, they can create a rebound congestion that is much worse than the original symptoms, *and* much harder to treat. Nasal decongestants are very useful in the setting of a cold, but not so great for long-term use for allergies. Otherwise, in general, I recommend discussing all treatments you might consider using with your doctor.



### **What about allergy testing?**

Allergy testing can be helpful to pinpoint what specific allergies you might have. If they are severe, allergists can work with you to administer immunotherapy in various forms (like shots or sublingual treatments) to reduce your body's allergic response to that specific allergen. I don't know that I'd necessarily say that all singers need to get allergy tested, but if you are suffering with multiple or recurrent or severe allergies, it's certainly worth considering.

### **When should singers make a decision to see an ENT/voice specialist for treatment?**

Anytime, really – that's what we're here for! I tend to think it's best if we actually can see you before things get terrible, and try some treatments, ideally well in advance of important vocal obligations. Each medication can have varying side effects, and they are notoriously variable across individuals. Some people find these side effects quite mild; others find some medications intolerable. It takes at least a few days to understand what your response to these treatments will be, so it's ideal if we have some lead time to assess your response to medications and their potential side effects. In general, I like seeing singers sooner rather than later; it gives us the time, energy, and space to think through effective treatment plans in a way that is not always easy if we are backed up against an impending performance immediately.

### **Got it - that makes total sense! I do have to ask this question, because it's one of the most difficult. When we are dealing with allergy symptoms on a show day, how do we make the decision to perform - or not?**

Most of my days are spent navigating this issue with singers; assessing their symptoms, examining their vocal folds, and weighing the costs of canceling versus the challenges of trying to perform. This is often an incredibly difficult, deeply personal, but above all *individual and specific* decision-making process, so it is hard to provide blanket recommendations here. I suppose the only recommendation I might try to make is the most obvious one: try to see and have a discussion with your trusted voice squad (your laryngologist, speech-language pathologist, and voice teacher or coach). We can really help navigate these tough situations and advocate for you! Yet another reason to have your squad in place before allergies – or colds or injuries or whatever – arise!

### **Is there anything else do you wish singers knew about allergies?**

Because of this very question – and because so many singers have questions about allergies – I recorded an episode on my podcast all about allergies! The podcast is called *KwakTalks*, and the one on allergies is a conversation with my friend and colleague, Dr. Nathanael Horne, who is an allergist! So lots of good tidbits there.

When the spring gunk strikes, don't panic! Follow Dr. Kwak's advice, and create a treatment plan with your doctor early, especially if you've been susceptible to allergies in the past. A "vocal squad," as Dr. Kwak calls it, is essential for every singer, so if you don't yet have a trusted ENT in your area, this article is your sign to find one. We're vocal athletes, after all, and we need the same kind of support!

If you're in the New York City metro area, you can make an appointment with Dr. Kwak by contacting NYU Langone Health. Learn more about him at [www.paulekwak.com](http://www.paulekwak.com), and check out *KwakTalks* on your favorite podcast app!

## Content Writer - Blog Example

Client: Performing Arts Organization

### Opera is good for your health!

When you're feeling stressed, how do you cope?

If you pop on your headphones and blast your favorite aria, you're onto something!

April is [Stress Awareness Month](#), a time to bring attention to the negative effects of stress on our health and wellbeing. In the short term, stress can make us [feel](#) exhausted, irritable, and anxious, and can cause physical symptoms like headache and stomachache. Long-term, stress has been linked to serious mental and physical health problems, like high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, depression, and diabetes. There are many ways to relieve stress – movement, meditation, watching a funny cat video – but music has been shown to be one of the most powerful.

#### What music does to your brain

Studies show that most people listen to an average of [20.7 hours](#) of music every week (but we are willing to bet our readers consume even more than that!). But what actually happens inside our brain when we listen to [“Nessun dorma?”](#)

Music [moves](#) through our ears as vibrations, and the inner ear translates these vibrations into electrical signals. Our neurons then transmit the signals to certain areas of the brain's cerebral cortex. But the brain doesn't have just one space dedicated to experiencing music (that's why scientists are so interested in studying it!). From here, different regions of the brain detect the different elements of the signals — like tone, pitch, and rhythm — and the brain combines all that information to allow us to fully experience music. Fascinatingly, the parts of the brain that processes emotions also fire up in response to music, so music is [wired](#) *directly into our feelings*.

[Studies like this one](#) have found that listening to music can lower your heart rate and cortisol levels, and that it causes the brain to release [endorphins](#), a critical neurotransmitter that helps relieve pain, reduce stress, and improve your sense of wellbeing. Music therapy can also have a significant benefit in preventing burnout. A 6-week study showed that after having access to

30-minute music listening sessions each day at work for a month, operating room staff reported [decreased stress levels](#) and less emotional exhaustion.

### What should I listen to?

Historically, most studies about music and stress have used lyricless music, like classical or ambient. While these studies did find both of these types of music to be effective at reducing stress and anxiety, that doesn't mean that they're necessarily "better" than other genres. In fact, the American Music Therapy Association [states](#) that "All styles of music can be useful in effecting change in a client or patient's life." The effects can vary, based on the person's relationship to and enjoyment of the piece of music.

Different kinds of music can sometimes be linked to different outcomes, however. Listening to music at 60 beats per minute, the [same pattern as alpha waves](#) in the brain, can cause brain frequencies to shift towards relaxed alpha wave patterns, thought by some to be the brain's optimal learning state. Because music is so closely linked to our emotions, different genres can help us achieve different outcomes. If you're looking to feel inspired or motivated, studies show that [rap and hip-hop may help](#). For those seeking to work on their identities, [heavy metal](#) was shown to play a role in creating well-adjusted young adults.

A team of musicians, neuroscientists, and music therapists have even claimed to create [the "most relaxing" song ever](#), but I'll let you be the judge of that.

### The added benefit of the operatic tragedy

While opera contains many soothing, beautiful moments – like the ["Méditation" from Thaïs](#) or [Le nozze di Figaro's famous "Sull'aria"](#) – the genre isn't exactly known for being drama-free. But if you've ever felt better after listening to a sad song or watching a tearjerker movie, you know that a little emotional drama can feel pretty healing (there's a reason Taylor Swift's breakup songs are so popular). [Researchers](#) have found that watching "emotionally arousing dramas" releases endorphins, and can even potentially boost pain tolerance and feelings of group bonding. In other words, tragedies like *La bohème* or *Pagliacci* can actually make us feel better, not worse!

Whether it's opera, hip-hop, or something in between, finding the tunes that resonate most with you is key to successfully using music to enhance your mood. This Stress Awareness Month, consider experimenting with different genres and styles of music to discover the ones that best help you unwind. Embrace the healing power of music and let it guide you to a more relaxed and balanced state of mind.

## Ghostwriter - Blog/Article

Client: Women's leadership coach

## What Barbie Teaches Us About the Double-Bind of Modern Womanhood

The *Barbie* movie has joyfully taken over the world. Sold out showings abound, and just 17 days after opening, it became the first movie helmed by a solo female director to [hit \\$1 billion](#) at the box office. It's a lot of fun, but it also tackles some big issues. Among them, how it feels to be a woman in today's world.

**\*\*Warning: spoilers for *Barbie* below!\*\***

In *Barbie's* second act, America Ferrera's character, Gloria, comforts Barbie (who feels like she isn't good enough to be worthy) with an impassioned speech. You know the one.

*"It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are so beautiful, and so smart, and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough. Like, we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong.*

*You have to be thin, but not too thin. And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. You have to have money, but you can't ask for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to lead, but you can't squash other people's ideas. You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman, but also always be looking out for other people. You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is insane, but if you point that out, you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood. But always stand out and always be grateful. But never forget that the system is rigged. So find a way to acknowledge that but also always be grateful. You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too hard! It's too contradictory and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you! And it turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong, but also everything is your fault.*

*I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us. And if all of that is also true for a doll just representing women, then I don't even know."*

Ferrera delivers this speech perfectly, and it spoke to my heart. I thought of all the women I've taught and coached, and how often a version of this monologue played in their heads. "You are never just right. You're too much. You're too little. What you do is never enough. *Who you are is never enough.*" Haven't we all felt this way at some point in our lives?

Maybe you feel that way right now.

I work with women of all ages, across a variety of backgrounds, and I've never met one who didn't understand this reality deeply. Why is that? Where does this feeling of "not enough" come from, and more importantly: how do we let it go?



### **Barbieland vs. The Real World**

Many women feel like they can't do anything right, but that impression doesn't come from thin air. It's rooted in experience. Research by Amy Diehl, Leanne Dzubinski, and Amber Stephenson revealed that [virtually any characteristic](#) can be leveraged against a woman at work. What's more, these criticisms related to facets of women's identity, such as race, age, parental status, attractiveness, and physical ability.

When Barbie travels from girl-power Barbieland to The Real World, others treat her differently. She is viewed as an object, less capable, and inferior to Ken - which makes her feel insecure. Women have this experience at least two times in our lives. First, when we go through puberty and our bodies grow ahead of our self-image. Suddenly we are seen as older, and we are treated differently by the boys in school, even getting catcalled by adult men in the street (I remember this happening, terrifyingly, to one of my young daughters). It happens again when high-achieving women transition from academia to the workplace. College can be Barbieland, where hard work and ability is rewarded and the path to success is clear and achievable. When we enter the workplace, we're like Barbie in The Real World, where nothing is clear. Getting ahead isn't just about hard work, it also about self-promotion and risk taking and a myriad of other things. We have traveled to this new land with confidence, and when the rules suddenly change, our self-image takes a major hit.

### Never “just right”

In my experience and supported by research, women in business often fall into a double-bind. For example, if I asked you to describe a leader, you may use adjectives like “assertive,” “commanding,” or “dominant,” traits typically associated with our old ideas of masculinity. While the average workplace has become more collaborative over time, our past expectations of leaders still invade our subconscious. Traditionally feminine (whatever that means) characteristics, like “warmth” or “tenderness” don’t mesh well with what we expect from leaders. Because women are held to embedded biases about their gender while also being measured against standards of leadership linked to masculinity, we often face backlash. We’re seen as too soft or too tough, but never *just right*.

### Speaking up breaks the spell

If you haven’t seen Barbie yet (what are you waiting for?!), you should know that when Gloria gives this speech, it brings a brainwashed-by-patriarchy Barbie back to reality. One by one, the group of deprogrammed Barbies ([alongside iconic ally Allan](#)) return the others to their original state by speaking up about the cognitive dissonance of being a woman. It’s a magical antidote in the context of the movie, but it works in the real world too.

There is power in speaking truth. It allows us to see the invisible and transforms an idea into something real. When we share our knowledge and experiences, it causes a ripple effect. Other women are inspired to reflect and share their own lived experience. Those who hear the truth wake up. As more and more voices are added - including men’s voices - the ripples grow into a tidal wave. Speaking truth and naming a problem is how change begins - both here and in Barbieland.

### Embracing your Swag-HER

As everything settles down in Barbieland, Barbie still has a choice to make: perfection vs humanity. We have that choice as well. No matter how hard we try, we can’t be everything to everyone. We can tie ourselves into every knot in the book, and there will still be people who won’t like us. Because likability is expected of women, it’s a tough pill to swallow.

Yet universal adoration, like being a woman, is impossible. There are people out there who don’t like pizza or apple pie or puppies, and there are people who won’t like you. Once you get past the disappointment, this realization changes your life. Since everything about you is going to be criticized by *someone*, you might as well do what you want. Instead of trying desperately to be liked, get comfortable with the person you *are*, and find your own path to success. While effective tools and helpful feedback can give you a leg up, adhering to the rules of behavior is something we can leave behind, no matter our age. You don’t have to do it in a “masculine” or “feminine” way, you just have to do it like *you*.



## Ghostwriter - Article

Client: Executive Leadership Coach

### Emotion: your superpower for peak performance and better living

Emotions get a bad rap. Describing someone as “emotional” is rarely perceived as a compliment, and the word has long been [weaponized](#) as a way to discredit others (especially women). Many of us have a belief that emotions get in the way of good decision-making, and simply “don’t belong in the workplace.” I’ve met leaders who claim to have eliminated emotion from their decision-making completely, and hold others to the same standard.

Let me bust that myth for you right now. [Study](#) after [study](#) has shown that emotions help us to be better leaders, and that our attempts to suppress our emotions have real [repercussions](#) for our physical and emotional health—not to mention our [relationships](#) with those around us.

So what’s the deal? Why is this flawed logic so widely accepted?


Many of us have a difficult time managing our emotions, so it’s become common practice to try to suppress or ignore our feelings (oftentimes referred to as compartmentalizing), rather than learning how to accept and manage them. Emotional regulation is an aspect of emotional intelligence that is especially essential in the workplace, but it’s virtually impossible to regulate our emotions [without](#) acknowledging them.

Emotions are a normal part of being human, and it’s in our best interest to see and understand how our feelings can enhance our leadership, instead of trying to eliminate them (or pretend they don’t exist).

#### Emotions drive motivation, and motivation drives behavior.

The concept of motivation is closely related to emotion. Both of these words share the same underlying Latin root, [movere](#), which means “to move.” Emotions—both positive and negative—are often the catalyst that inspires us to take action. Let’s use exercise as an example. There are many potential motivators; we exercise for enjoyment, for stress relief, to spend time with others, for health benefits, out of guilt or pressure, for the satisfaction of meeting a goal. Behind each of these motivators lies a feeling, and we act in pursuit of that feeling. When we ignore those emotions, our ability to execute suffers.

High motivation is intrinsically linked with high engagement, an especially important consideration in our current world of work. Only [one-third](#) of employees report being engaged in their work, accounting for approximately \$1.9 trillion in lost productivity. Disengaged employees are also more likely to [“quiet quit”](#) or leave their positions altogether. Beyond the statistics, low engagement can make everything feel like a slog. When we don’t feel like doing something, it



takes an extraordinary amount of self-regulation to make ourselves do the thing. Self-regulation is a limited resource, replenished only by self-care. When self-regulation is low, we make poor decisions and save our worst behavior for the people that we love the most.

Highly-motivated [employees](#) are more productive, perform better, have better relationships with the managers, and—most importantly—are *happier* than their less-engaged counterparts. If we want to create workplaces where we *want* to work, we need to welcome productive emotions in as an essential part of culture. Notice that I didn't say positive. Productive emotions include the full range of emotions - positive and negative - as they are all informative.

### **Emotion connects us to other people.**

Emotional intelligence has been found to be the strongest [predictor](#) of a leader's performance, explaining a full 58% of success in all types of jobs. There are several reasons why, but many of those reasons have to do with the role emotional intelligence plays in our relationships with others.

We spend a great deal of time with those we work with; sometimes more than with our own close friends and families. Connecting with others is a basic human need that needs to be fulfilled, and without it, our mental and physical health suffers. At the very best, our work interactions enrich our experience, make us better, and encourage everyone to thrive. Persistent and pervasive negative interactions at work, however, have the potential to cause distress, deplete our ability to think clearly, and increase absenteeism and turnover rates.

Those lacking emotional intelligence may struggle to work as part of a team, or to listen to and respect their colleagues' ideas. But when we invest in developing our emotional intelligence, we are much more likely to foster and maintain positive relationships, including with those we work with. Bringing others into the conversation, especially those with different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds, has been shown to [boost](#) creativity and innovation. When we have trust in those around us, we are more likely to seek out other perspectives, which plays a critical role in good decision-making. As you may now be beginning to see, emotion operates in an inter-dependent way with perspective, energy, and relationships. Our efforts to exorcise it from the workplace can come at quite a cost.

### **Intuition is real.**

Like our cognitive and physical systems, our emotional system provides a wealth of information about our environment and our operation in it. If we turn it off, we turn off a crucial system of insights, relationship building, and early warning flags: intuition. Intuition [isn't](#) some woo-woo concept, it's the intelligence that comes from what we are sensing about the environment, the people, the likely course of events. "Trust your gut" is common advice for a reason. Intuition offers a [reduction](#) in overall cognitive load, giving the ability to respond instantly, while simultaneously giving us more confidence in our knowledge and decision-making capabilities. Intuition is best when paired when rational thought, but in some instances, intuition trumps an



analytical approach. For instance, we are [more likely](#) to be successful at gauging someone else's honesty when using intuition.

However, our intuition is only as good as our emotional "intel.". If we cut ourselves off from our emotions, it's impossible to accurately access our intuition. Imagine piloting a ship with three control panels - all delivering crucial information about not only the environment the ship is in, but about the ship itself. Because you don't understand the value of the instrument cluster, you cover one of the control panels with a blanket and turn the sound off! [Research](#) shows that people who lack emotional intelligence—those who are not aware of their own emotions—are less able to read their own bodily signals. Because they didn't recognize the signals as a warning, they made riskier decisions with worse outcomes.

Emotions are not your enemy, a sign of immaturity, or something to be compartmentalized into a box never to be opened. They play an important role in well-being, creating great relationships, making important decisions, and life satisfaction. Instead of suppressing your feelings, tap into them, asking, "What information is here for me?" It may prove to be a superpower in waiting.

Rossini's [La donna del lago](#) is a story with deep roots in Scottish history. Based on the narrative poem by Sir Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, the story concerns the [power struggle](#) between King James V for control over the Scottish Highlands — and for the heart of Elena.

Some of the characters in *La donna del lago* are based on real people, while others take inspiration from the historical figures of the time. Let's get to know the characters from this under-performed operatic gem!

## Content Writer - Blog

Client: Resonance Works (performing arts organization)

### Elena Douglas (Ellen Douglas)

Elena is a fictional character, but her family surname isn't. The [Douglasses](#) were a prominent Highland clan who played a major role in many of Scotland's most epic battles with England. The clan also had a longstanding feud with King James V (more on that later).

Ellen is a common Scottish name, but the poem's picturesque setting may have also inspired her name. Sir Walter Scott was originally inspired to write *The Lady of the Lake* by a visit to Loch Katrine. The original Gaelic name of the island was An t-Eilean Molach, meaning "the lush isle."

In Gaelic, Eilean actually means “island,” but it may have inspired Scott to name his heroine Ellen. Scott’s poem was so popular that Loch Katrine became commonly known as Ellen’s Isle. The name stuck, and was eventually used in maps instead of the original Gaelic form.

### **King James V/Uberto**

One of the (several) men vying for Elena’s affections is Uberto, who is really King James V of Scotland. The real James V was rumored to travel the countryside in disguise to mingle with his subjects, a myth that inspired Sir Walter Scott’s poem.

James V also had a real-life feud with the Douglas clan. Because James V was only 17 months old when he became king, he had a series of rotating guardians. However, when James’ stepfather, Archibald Douglas, 6th Earl of Angus, became his guardian, he refused to give up control of the young king. James V was under Douglas’ control for three years, and was virtually held prisoner. When James V finally took claim to the throne at age 16, he exiled Douglas, beginning a bloody feud that lasted throughout much of his reign.

### **Malcom Groeme (Malcolm Graeme)**

Elena’s true love, is the young Highland chieftan Malcom Groeme. In *La donna del lago*, Malcom is played by a mezzo-soprano, an operatic tradition in which a woman plays the role of a young man, often called a “pants role” in opera.


It doesn’t appear that Scott’s Malcolm Graeme was based on a specific figure, but he does share a name with the [Graeme/Grahams](#) of Montrose, a clan who controlled territories in both the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands. Legend says that the Grahams are descendants of one Græme who commanded the armies of Fergus II in 450 A.D., breaking the Antonine Wall and driving the Roman legions out of Scotland. We can’t be sure what inspired Scott’s character, but this would certainly be a fitting name for the honorable and heroic Malcolm.

### **Duglas d’Angus (Douglas of Angus)**

In *La donna del lago*, Duglas d’Angus is the king’s former tutor, who has now been exiled as his enemy. While it’s unclear if Duglas is based entirely on one person, his character was certainly inspired by James V’s imprisonment by and the real-life exile of Archibald Douglas, 6th Earl of Angus.

### **Rodrigo di Dhu (Roderick Dhu)**

Rodrigo is the rebel chief of the Highlanders, who is also betrothed to Elena. While not a real person, in the poem, Roderick is the head of clan Alpine (sometimes called Alpin or MacAlpine), a family of seven Scottish clans who claimed to descend from [Cináed mac Ailpín](#) (Kenneth the I of Scotland), King of the Picts, whom the Scots consider their first King. In Gaelic, dhu, means “black,” and was commonly used as a descriptor and nickname because many people shared the same surnames.



Roderick Dhu is also a part of American music history! “Hail to the Chief” is played when the President of the United States arrives at any formal occasion, but its origins lay in *The Lady of the Lake*. Written by James Sanderson, the song sets Stanza XIX of the Second Canto of Scott's poem, “Hail to the Chief who in triumph advances! Honored and blessed be the ever-green Pine!” The poem's "Chief" is none other than Roderick Dhu, who dies in battle at the monarch's hand.

See how the drama unfolds June 28 and 30 at the Charity Randall Theatre. [Tickets](#) for Rossini's *La donna del lago* are on sale now!