

HR Monthly Magazine

EXCELLENT TREATMENT OF IMPORTANT TOPIC

The Gentle Revolution:

Men and Women at Work - What Goes Wrong and How to Fix it

By Helena Cornelius

Published by Simon & Schuster

Reviewed by GREG LATEMORE

THIS book is indeed excellent; Cornelius obviously knows what she is talking about. As director of the Conflict Resolution Network in Australia, this is hardly surprising.

Her approach is practical and realistic as well as being anchored in good theory. She avoids the gender stereotyping and the blame making that seems to characterise much of the popular literature on female/male relationships. The Gentle Revolution is in a class well above John Gray's Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus (Harper Collins, 1992). The author offers many sound strategies to overcome the stumbling blocks in such relationships.

Cornelius highlights eight gender values: FEMININE = equality, agreement, feeling, and interdependence.

MASCULINE = status, competition, action and objects, and autonomy. These form the basis for the book's structure and can be measured in her 24-item "Gender Values Quiz". While the sample sizes on this quiz might be low and need to be fully validated, it is a useful vehicle for discussion.

The Gentle Revolution is rich with previews, summaries, cartoons, figures (70 of them), endnotes, a bibliography, a detailed index, and helpful appendices. Her up-to-date bibliography even has a succinct comment on most items mentioned.

I particularly liked her beginning and ending chapters on "the quest for wholeness". Cornelius is clearly adept in exploring the nuances and dynamics of relationships, here credibility and experience rings loud and clear throughout this marvellous book.

My only minor criticism is the cartoon-style front cover. The surprisingly romantic overtones in the exchange between the man and the woman seem to distort and trivialise the contents of the book.

The Gentle Revolution is an exhaustive but accessible treatment of an important topic; I recommend it very highly. I endorse Cornelius herself when she concludes:

"We need to be more comfortable with the ebb and flow of masculine and feminine energies within ourselves, and through the changing circumstances of our lives. If either the masculine or feminine principle is squashed, we are all less powerful, less whole.

"This movement towards the integration of masculine and feminine, both within the individual and within our organisation, is the gentle revolution. It is well under way, and we are all participants."

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Teaching a gender workshop? Helping someone through a gender issue?

The Gentle Revolution is an invaluable resource book. It shows how to:

- understand and explain the sources of conflicts between men and women at work
- sort out problems of differences in masculine and feminine styles with specific conflict resolution skills.
(Relates well to other Conflict Resolution Network training materials.)
- create a better mix between the masculine and feminine parts of ourselves
- balance workplaces for both styles, drawing on the benefits of each.