I get lost driving ALL of the time. In an act of mercy, a couple of years ago, instead of buying chocolates for Valentines Day, my husband purchased a Global Positioning System (GPS) for me to use in my car. It was such a thoughtful gift and I learned so many lessons from using it! The first lesson that I learned is that, like me, many women start out on journeys without really knowing where we want to go or even how to get to our destinations. When driving a car, not clarifying for ourselves where we want to go wastes time, increases stress and wastes gas! Not knowing what we want has a similar impact on our lives. When we do not clarify our values and life goals, we waste time, increase stress, and waste energy! Therefore, one of the first activities that we need to engage in as women is to engage in the process of "values clarification".

Our values are our personal standards for others and ourselves in our lives. They define what we will and will not stand for and more importantly, they help us set boundaries. Without clear boundaries, we become vulnerable to the whims and caprices of others. Additionally, we may allow our lives to be externally driven by other people's standards and expectations. Therefore, our values provide the guiding principles for our thoughts, behaviors, and goals in life. Clarifying our values provides us with a personal compass that can lead to success and can be an effective strategy for eliminating self-sabotage. Women (and men for that matter) who do not identify their core values are more conflict avoidant, indecisive, stagnant and confused. They become vulnerable to simply "going along to get along" and wind up doing things that are against their best interests or spirits — and selling themselves short when it comes to their expectations of others in their relationships, their workplaces, and in their world. Clarifying what your top priorities are allows you to focus your energy on what matters most to you and allows you to clearly define how much you can feasibly do, without hurting myself — which leads to the second lesson I learned from my GPS!

The second lesson that I learned from having a GPS is that sometimes we women set goals for ourselves and can not let go of our commitments — even when we see that we are going in the wrong direction and that our strategy is not actually working out. For example, I learned that sometimes even when I'm TOLD by the GPS to go "left," I still turn "right!" You see, some of us just cannot take directions. We have to experience consequences for ourselves because we base our decisions on what we "feel" and not necessarily our logic. To illustrate this point, I will share a personal story. One day, I had a meeting out in North East St. Paul and I was riding with my husband. Although neither of us had ever been there before, he dropped me off at the meeting location on time and with no hassle. A month or two later, I was again scheduled to go out to the same place for another meeting. This time I was driving myself. I did not print out a Yahoo map (because we all know that they will give you directions to get to a location in 8 blocks that, with common sense, you could have reached in 3 blocks)! Consequently, I decided to rely solely on my GPS. Using the GPS, I faithfully headed out on 694 East. As soon as I got to an unfamiliar place, the GPS told me to turn left, but I was SURE that the last time we went to

the place, we had turned right! Therefore, I ignored the system and turned right…telling myself "machines can never replace the brains of humans! Well, needless to say, fifteen minutes later, I found myself in the "boonies" and nowhere close to the meeting location. I learned that sometimes people give us feedback that may be helpful to our success, but we do not listen. After all, it is not easy to "trust" other people or sources of information when you are unsure of where you are going (whether it is to a meeting or a place in life)! Learning to trust others with more information requires learning to trust your own ability to be a critical thinker, make good judgments, and follow directions. Because we stay committed to the wrong courses of action, some of us stay shackled to unhealthy jobs, unhealthy relationships, unhealthy habits, and unhealthy options for change! We just cannot trust ourselves to listen to our own good senses or to others who tell us we are going the wrong direction! We stick to a course of action without changing-hoping that the man we are dating will do better in the future, or that the job we hate will suddenly become a nurturing healthy place to work, or that our children will suddenly become more considerate, appreciative and responsible. Our ability to stick to conditions that no longer serve us is simply evidence for the adage: "Insanity is repeating the same behaviors, expecting different results." We need to be able to change course.

The third and final lesson that I learned from my GPS, was that even when I made the wrong turn, the machine kept reminding me that it was "re-calculating." There is HOPE in recalculating. Recalculating means that I maintain my destination and establish a new path to getting there. I may have wasted more time and energy than I originally thought necessary to get to my destination, but that is okay. Life is not a destination--it is a journey. So, along the journey of life, I may have to do some cognitive reframing, change my perspective, and see the glass as half full rather than half-empty. If I make a wrong turn on the way to my destination, I may see or learn something that I would not have otherwise seen or learned; I may learn to appreciate my time, my resources, and myself better. I may even have to learn to ask for help or to get directions from others outside myself. As I recalculate, I may have to learn to trust.

In the end, what I have actually learned from the GPS is that even if I am going the wrong direction, I can always turn around. My internal, personal GPS (my values) will get me to my desired destination even if I am going a different route than I had originally intended. So, on the journey of life, when we mess up, make mistakes and choose the wrong path, just know that all we have to do is "Re-calculate, sister, re-calculate."

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