

The Mid-Career Donut Hole

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What is mid-career?

Who am I?

■ Career

- Staff Researcher, VMware (2010-present)
- Researcher, Microsoft (2005-2010)
- User Technology, IBM (2001-2005)
- Researcher, Australian Defence Force Academy (2001)
- Software Engineer, Now-Defunct Telecom, (1995-2000)

■ Education

- MS, Human-Computer Interaction (2001)
- BS, Mathematics (2001)
- BS, Computer Science (1998)

What are we talking about?

- What are the problems for mid-career women?
- What is the mid-career donut hole?
- What do we do?

What are the problems for mid-career women?

24 hours per day
7 days per week
365 days per year

What are the problems for mid-career women?

Career

- **What's next?**
 - Stay in tech?
 - Stay in tech...ish?
 - Move to management?
 - GTFO?

Personal

- **Two-body problem**
- **Family (kids, aging relatives)**
- **Personal time**

What is the mid-career donut hole?

- The point where we're most likely to leave our field.
- Women drop out of tech fields in much higher numbers around age 35.
 - Lack of support
 - Lack of growth

What is working against us?

- Isolation
- Insufficient role models
- Being nice vs being aggressive
- Our own beliefs and expectations

What do we do?

- Find and create support networks
 - Systers
 - Meetups
 - Birds-of-a-feather
- Know the cultural expectations
 - Short-term: use them to our advantage
 - Long-term: shift the culture
- Know what holds us back
- Accept that you can't do it all



How do I reach?

- **Reach up for new opportunities**
- **Reach out to friends and colleagues**
- **Reach down to others who need a hand**

What do I do next?

Determine what you will do to fill in your donut hole

Network network network

- **This week: Build your network**
- **After you return to regular life**
 - Evaluate your network
 - Nurture your network
 - Build your network
 - Be open to others networking with you

Be the change you want to see in this world

"We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do."

Mahatma Gandhi



Thanks!

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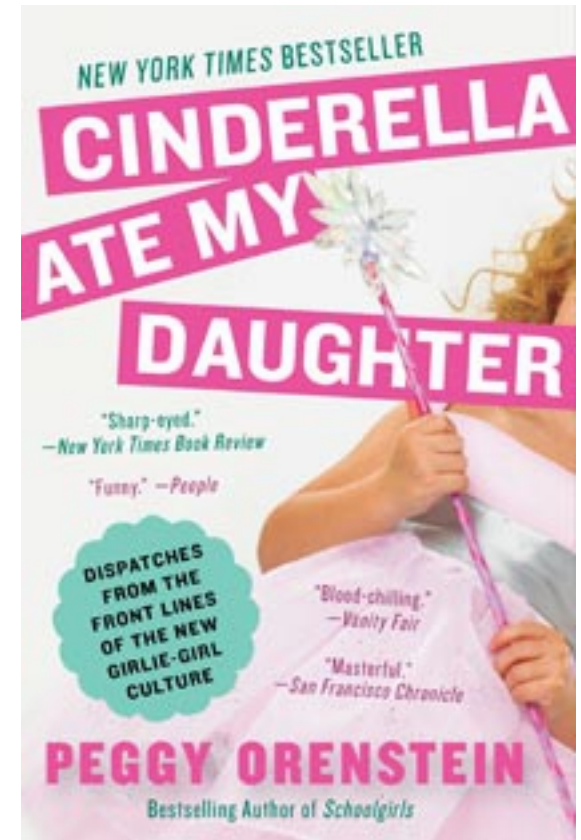
Appendix

What should I read to learn more?



“Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics”

Cinderella Ate My Daughter



How do I find a mentor?

- **If your company has a mentoring program, take advantage of it**
 - Don't hold out for the perfect mentor. Ms/Mr Right Now is great.
- **Build your network**
 - NO: "Will you be my mentor?"
 - YES: "I'd like to hear more about [this awesome thing]. Could we chat about it over coffee next week?"
- **Nurture your network**
- **Find the right communities**
 - Systems
 - Local meetups
- **Be a mentor yourself**

How do I be a mentor?

- Listen
- Be open, be honest, be authentic
- Provide links to your network
- Learn from your mentee