

Ellen Connelly Taaffe

The Mirrored Door: Break Through the Hidden Barrier That Locks Successful Women in Place



“I encourage you to take in *The Mirrored Door* with a journal at your side, friends to discuss it with, a lens of curiosity and self-reflection, and compassion for yourself and others. When you can unravel the past and understand how culture has conditioned our beliefs and influences our workplace systems, you have more freedom to choose what you bring with you to your company and your future. It will take some letting go and building up, along with experimentation and practice. You are no stranger to hard work. You can do this. And when you do, you will step into the lead role of your career and life in a new, rewarding way. You will empower yourself every time you greet opportunity and unlock, open, and pass over the threshold of the mirrored door, leaving the door ajar for those who follow.”

BIOGRAPHY

[Ellen Connelly Taaffe](#) is a Clinical Associate Professor at the Kellogg School of Management, where she teaches Personal Leadership Insights and is the Director of Women's Leadership Programming. Ellen designs and delivers the Kellogg Women's Leadership Seminar series, the signature program for female students across Kellogg's Full-time, Evening/Weekend, and Executive MBA programs.

Outside of Kellogg, Ellen serves as an independent board director for two public and one private company boards, where she is a Lead Director, Vice Chair, and chairs one Nominating and Governance Committees and one Compensation Committee and serves as a member of two audit committees. Ellen also runs a leadership advisory consulting, speaking, and coaching business and is a TEDx speaker. She shares her insights on leadership, careers, and advancing women and inclusion through her writing and speaking in media like *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, *Business Insider*, *Washington Post*, *Bloomberg*, and *Kellogg Insight*.

Prior to her academic, governance, and coaching career, Ellen spent 25 years with Fortune 500 companies holding the top brand management post at divisions of PepsiCo, Royal Caribbean, and Whirlpool Corporation. She built world-class brands, led multi-billion-dollar portfolios with P&L responsibility, launched new businesses, led turnarounds, and merged businesses and cultures post-acquisition. In her upcoming book, *The Mirrored Door: Break Through the Hidden Barrier that Locks Successful Women in Place* (October 10, 2023 / Page Two), Ellen uses her vast experience to help women understand and navigate through internal and external obstacles to create the future career they desire.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Mirrored Door: Break Through the Hidden Barrier that Locks Successful Women in Place (Page Two, October 10, 2023)

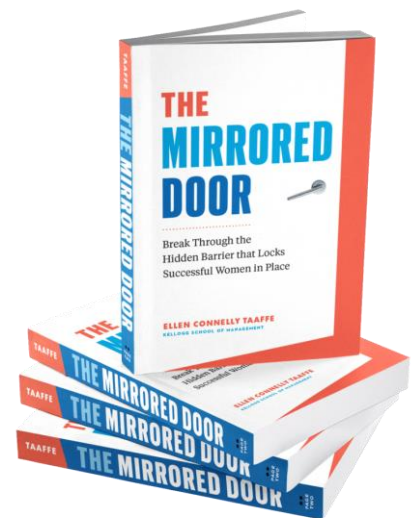
Unlock what's blocking your career, and open the door to new opportunity

At some point in their careers, many women encounter the mirrored door—the place where, when presented with opportunities, they reflect inward and hesitate, deem they're not ready or worthy enough to move forward, whether that is to raise their hands or go for the next role.

But there is a way to break through, and to overcome the gendered expectations that girls and women internalize over our lifetimes that create a hidden barrier that keeps them from reaching their full potential.

Drawing on research, stories from her own career, and those of her students and the mid-late career women she has coached, Professor Ellen Connelly Taaffe explains why the five perils of success—being prepared to perfection, eager to please, trying to fit the mold, pushing too hard, and patiently performing and expecting rewards to follow—get women to a certain level, and then may prevent them taking the next step in their careers as expectations rise. She offers a new, empowering framework for navigating the challenges of the workplace with more awareness and expertise.

With a firm grounding in research, Ellen teaches about the realities of the workplace, how it influences perceptions of women, and what to do to overcome the distorted self-reflections that ultimately hold us back.



A former Fortune 50 senior executive turned board director and professor, Ellen is on a mission for women to have more seats and voices at the table of workplace decisions. In *The Mirrored Door*, she guides the reader to assess themselves and their situations realistically so that they can take charge of their career success and take the lead in their lives.

INTERVIEW TOPICS

- We've all heard about the "glass ceiling"—but what about the mirrored door? What is it?
- Five strategies that help women succeed but also unintentionally sideline them
- Stop being your toughest critic! How to combat the inner antagonist that overtakes your shot at growth
- Can you be yourself at work? Three questions to ask about your authentic self
- Five ways to give, get, and gain from feedback
- Why courage comes before confidence
- Twelve principles to live by to unlock your inner "protagonista" and become the heroine of your own story
- Why women struggle to set boundaries in the workplace—and how to overcome people-pleasing behaviors in their professional and personal life
- What happens when we dethrone the queen bee—and why the 'hype woman' helps all women
- Why women struggle with self-promotion—and how to shift from thoughts to action using the four-part framework
- How childhood expectations help women succeed academically but carry self-judgment and hesitation later

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Why did you write this book? What was the origin?
- What is *The Mirrored Door* and why does it matter for women?
- How does our upbringing and cultural expectations impact our careers?
- You say that our success strategies can become perilous, tell me more.
- What would you recommend to someone who is:
 - Preparing for perfection
 - Eager to please
 - Fitting the mold
 - Working pedal to the metal
 - Patiently performing and awaiting to be noticed

- What peril did you face the most in your career?
- What can leaders do to help open the mirrored door?

ENDORSEMENTS

“This incisive, inviting guidebook surveys the challenges high-achieving women face in the workplace and shares fresh advice for navigating obstacles both inner and outer. Making her debut, Taaffe—who built and leads the Women’s Leadership Programs for MBA women at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management—makes the case that that, while women in the business world are often ‘held to a prevailing male leadership model and the resulting perceptions and institutional obstacles,’ they’re also often locked in place by another phenomenon: the ‘mirrored door.’ Taaffe argues that women face a kind of reflexive paralysis when presented with opportunity for advancement. ‘[We] question our readiness for and worthiness,’ she writes. ‘Instead of going for it, we assess that we cannot.’

*The Mirrored Door urges women to understand why they might behave this way—and then to let themselves go for it, by making their aspirations clear, soliciting feedback, dismantling ‘ingrained, unfair views,’ and staying true to one’s self while striving to fit (and improve) a company’s culture. With welcome nuance about the complexities and varieties of workplace experiences, Taaffe lays out techniques for women to knock at that door rather than wait to be invited in. Taaffe offers a wealth of accounts of women encountering biases, prioritizing others’ opinions, and more.” – **Publisher’s Weekly***

*“Ellen Connelly Taaffe’s image of the ‘mirrored door’ brilliantly and accurately describes women’s tendency to second-guess themselves when they bump up against barriers at work. Gazing into that mirror and asking, ‘Is it me?’ can paralyze us and make it difficult to take action. Ellen’s work is a powerful corrective to the endless focus on ‘imposter syndrome,’ which pathologizes self-doubt rather than offering a path forward. In this wise and humane book, she shows how women can address the internal barriers most likely to hold them back. Highly recommended!” – **Sally Helgesen, bestselling author of How Women Rise, Rising Together, and The Female Advantage***

*“The Mirrored Door is an inspiring guide for women looking to advance in their careers. Ellen Connelly Taaffe outlines the external and internal biases that lead to women getting stuck in their jobs. Through engaging stories, she offers frameworks and advice on how to move past these obstacles and create the future we all want.” – **Deepa Purushothaman, author of The First, the Few, the Only***



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“The Mirrored Door is a must-read for career-minded women who aspire to more. Ellen Connelly Taaffe connects insightful research, shares engaging stories, and thoughtfully reveals what might have once worked but could now be in the way. This book informs and inspires women to take charge of their careers.” – **Dorie Clark, Wall Street Journal**—bestselling author of *The Long Game*

“The Mirrored Door is the book that every female leader—of all ages and stages—needs to read. If you have ever struggled in your career, this book will provide you with valuable insights to identify and overcome the challenges that are preventing you from achieving the success that you want. Ellen Connelly Taaffe is a kind, wise mentor who provides you with the road map you need to create the future you want. I wish I had this book when I started my career.” – **Tricia Montalvo Timm, board director, former general counsel at Looker, and author of Embrace the Power of You**

“The Mirrored Door is a terrific primer for career-oriented women to create their own successful path, navigating through the systemic biases that women face in today’s workplace. It’s a compelling blueprint by former business executive and current professor, Ellen Connelly Taaffe.” – **Carter Cast, Clinical Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Kellogg School of Management and author of The Right—and Wrong—Stuff**

“Be the protagonist! That’s what practitioner-turned-professor Ellen Connelly Taaffe teaches women (and any leader who wants to sponsor women) how to do with her splendid storytelling and actionable advice. Ellen describes herself as the ‘professor full of doubt,’ but there’s no doubt about this book: if you want to shatter the glass ceiling, you’ll open The Mirrored Door. This book belongs alongside Sally Helgesen’s How Women Rise— welcome to the canon of literature sure to inspire the next generation of women leaders.” – **Whitney Johnson, CEO of Disruption Advisors and Wall Street Journal**—bestselling author of *Smart Growth*

“Ellen Connelly Taaffe cleverly focuses on the one thing any woman can do to power her career: burst through the self-created ‘mirrored door’ that often holds us back. This book is a compelling manual for banishing self-doubt and grabbing your desired and deserved future!” – **Gena Cox, PhD, executive coach, speaker, and author of Leading Inclusion**

“Ellen Connelly Taaffe brings a depth of knowledge and breadth of personal experience to every page. All women, regardless of career stage, will see themselves more clearly and be better equipped to step through the ‘mirrored door’ after reading this book.” – **Laurie Weingart, co-author of The No Club**

“While women often say they experience self-doubt and imposter syndrome, Ellen Connelly Taaffe’s excellent book points out that the system—through ingrained biases



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and outdated work practices—is designed to make us feel that way. She offers ways that each of us can pivot our thinking away from self-blame, and, through a series of journal prompts, gives readers a chance to reflect on how they can have a healthier relationship to work and achievement.” – Sarah Kaplan, Director of the Institute for Gender and the Economy (GATE) at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management

*“The Mirrored Door opens up the conversation for all women who are seeking to grow professionally and personally, no matter their stage in life. Ellen Connelly Taaffe generously shares her life and professional experiences while weaving in research-based evidence and the stories of women who navigated male-dominated corporate cultures while discovering their own gender biases that are so deeply ingrained in each of us. This book is an enlightening and practical guide for all women who seek to leverage their talents and power—and make a difference wherever they land.” – Tammy Gooler Loeb, award-winning author of **Work from the Inside Out***

*“The Mirrored Door is like having a caring, wise mentor show you the ropes of how to navigate the workplace and take charge of your own career and life. I wish it had been around for me to read at several different points in my career.” – Anne Lester, former managing director of JPMorgan Asset Management, board director, speaker, and author of **Your Best Financial Life***

*“If you lead women or are a woman, you must read The Mirrored Door. Ellen Connelly Taaffe has brilliantly written an inspiring, yet practical leadership book that is sure to become a go-to guide for aspiring and experienced career women and their allies. Through storytelling, research, and personal experience, she reveals what holds women back and what we can do about it. I wish I had it earlier in my career. Highly recommend!” – Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, Vice Chair of External Affairs at Royal Caribbean Group, former CEO of Celebrity Cruises, board director, and author of **Making Waves***

CONNECT

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