

# Getting Unstuck

Executive coach and consultant Erica Anderson Rooney dispels the limiting beliefs that hold us back.

BY GWEN GRAY

“U

ndeniable.” That’s the message Erica Anderson Rooney has been known to carry on her wrist lately in the form of a plastic, handmade friendship bracelet inspired by her daughter and the bracelet-making trend Taylor Swift fans have ignited.

Both the bracelet and one-word mantra are emblematic of Rooney, who is simultaneously driven and down-to-earth in her roles as a human resources executive,

keynote speaker, podcaster, career advancement coach, consultant and mother of two.

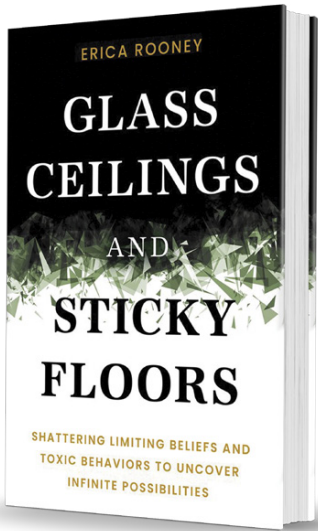
Her new book, *Glass Ceilings and Sticky Floors: Shattering Limiting Beliefs and Toxic Behaviors to Uncover Infinite Possibilities*, takes a closer look at why high-performing leaders, particularly women, seem to experience negative professional outcomes, ranging from general dissatisfaction or feeling stuck to burnout and defeat.

What she discovered in her own journey from student to personal fitness trainer to rising corporate HR leader was that, yes, there were, indeed, glass ceilings that loomed large in her male-dominated work environments, but there was something else, too. Something unreckoned inside her that seemed to be holding her back.

When she stopped to take a closer look, during a particularly challenging period within the COVID-19 pandemic, she recognized a number



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of limiting beliefs and toxic behaviors had emerged. As she looked around at the few female executives she knew, many were experiencing the same phenomena—from imposter syndrome to perfectionism—and it was impacting their ability to thrive in the workplace and at home.

Rooney decided to dive headlong into the issue. Both her podcast and her new book are devoted to helping leaders see and shatter their own limiting beliefs so they can bust through glass ceilings.

**FROM THE GROUND UP**

“Our whole lives, we have been told about this glass ceiling, right?... We spent so much time looking upwards at something that was so far away, when really, if we just looked within, and we looked down for a moment, and took stock of our own lives and our own emotions and our own actions..., we could start to make that climb a lot faster,” Rooney explains.

By her definition, the “sticky floors” in her book and podcast title are the flawed thoughts and damaging behaviors that most of us experience to some degree. Left unexamined, she argues, they hold us back professionally and personally.

*Glass Ceilings and Sticky Floors* devotes a chapter each to imposter syndrome, perfectionism, addiction, toxic relationships, fear of failure, overvaluing others’ opinions, burnout, lack of confidence and “human giver syndrome,” a term that refers to doing so much for others that you have no energy left for yourself. Included in each chapter are exercises and tips the reader can use to help identify and overcome the limiting belief.

**A METHOD TO ‘SNAP’ OUT OF IT**

Rooney arms her readers and podcast listeners with a step-by-step, science-backed process she developed for dispelling self-restricting mentalities and behaviors.

Named SNAP, it stands for the framework’s four steps: stop, name it, ask and answer, and pivot. Informed by research she’s studied on brain plasticity, the approach demonstrates how to pause and listen to the signals your body is giving you (increased heart rate, sweaty palms and rapid breathing, for example) to help pinpoint your feelings. From there, a series of questions helps you dig into why you’re feeling or reacting this way so you can then determine how to shift your circumstances or—more often—your mindset.

“Give yourself the grace to recognize that your first thought might not always be a helpful one, and that is OK,” Rooney says. “But we can work and shift and pivot. And the more frequently you do that, you will start to notice that your first thought is less negative, less harmful and more empowering.”

It’s a perpetual process that she compares to one of her passions: fitness. Rooney points out that “there is no final destination” when it comes to exercise and health. She adds, “People always ask me..., ‘Are we ever free from our ‘sticky floors’? And the answer is, ‘We’re never free from them. We just get more adept at dealing with them and recognizing them and moving through them.’”

**SETTING OUT TO BECOME IRRELEVANT**

Rooney is realistic about the forces that women, racial minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals and historically disadvantaged people face. Addressing one’s own limiting mindset, she acknowledges, “is not going to close the pay gap..., but it is going to help us make massive progress,” she says. “When you do the internal work, you are building the tools that you need to push through a lot of those systemic issues.

“Radical change,” she says, “has to start individually and from within.”

She hopes that, when people find themselves stuck, they realize they often have the resources within to free themselves and go on to smash ceilings—and that it is our duty to do what we can to right the inequalities of the world.

“My whole goal for this book is that it becomes obsolete in 10 years. If my daughter, who’s 6 now, picks it up and is like, ‘What is this archaic piece of crap?;’ I have done my job,” she laughs. ♦

**GRAY** IS A TRAVEL-OBSESSED, COLORADO-BASED WRITER COVERING LIFESTYLE, TOURISM, REAL ESTATE, FOOD AND THE ARTS.