

PUBLICATION

Determination: Young Women Forging Their Paths

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When I think of Ruth Bader Ginsburg it is not of her in her black robe with one of her iconic collars. It is of a picture of her I cut from the *ABA Journal* years ago and keep in my desk. In the photo, she is probably 30-years-old and she is smiling. She is wearing shorts and white polo sitting on a bed with her kids jumping behind her. It is a very human picture. And, isn't that what we need to remember? Ruth Bader Ginsburg was just like us and we can achieve things just like she did.

How do we follow in her footsteps? The first, but not obvious answer to that question, is quite simply that you don't have to follow in her footsteps. Her life's work was to give women options. She threw open the doors and now you get to choose what door(s) are right for you. (Thank you, Ruth.)

I believe she would give some of the following advice to young women:

1. Walk your own truth and ask for more: Ruth probably had some lonely days. I would imagine that being a trailblazer is only fun once you succeed because so many are vocally rooting for you to fail. But she knew that her own thoughts and ideas were as valuable as anyone else's and she stayed true to her beliefs. She did not accept the status quo. I am sure she battled with imposter syndrome, but she won. Remember that you are not an imposter; you belong.
2. When there is an obstacle, pivot and keep pushing: Ruth graduated number one in her class at Columbia and struggled to get a job. It is not lost on me that, had she not been so mercilessly discriminated against, she might not have ended up at the ACLU and opened all those doors. That does not in any way make how she was treated ok and she (or we) are under no obligation to remain positive when we are treated wrongly. We, however, must pivot until we find a path. Keep moving, sister.
3. Be strategic: Ruth always understood the moment she was in and she had a game plan. She used cases about men to advocate for equality for women. She was analytical. She relied on facts. She checked emotional arguments at the door and used her legal training.
4. Do pushups: Ruth lived to be 87 years old. She cared for her mind and body. Women so often care for everyone but themselves. There is no shame in self-care and in building a strong mind and body.

I will close with her words, "Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."