

Dr. Linda Brodsky's Story

Linda Brodsky, MD, is a successful surgeon and one of the most respected names in Pediatric Otolaryngology and an advocate for all women for equal opportunity and equal pay. She didn't start her career thinking that one day she would be writing a book and blogging about this topic, but unfortunately she experienced first hand what it was like to be treated differently from her male colleagues which strengthened her belief that "Women should be able to enjoy the full range of opportunities of professional and personal satisfaction as men." Most if not all women, regardless of their profession, would probably agree with her. Women have made great strides over the last several decades but there is still much work to be done and Linda's focus as an advocate for women will certainly pay off for generations to come. "I hope that there are other women who will be brave enough to engage the system of the inequitable treatment of women in the workplace, and that they will join me in helping to change the status quo so that we, our daughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, cousins, friends, and neighbors will all reach their greatest potential."

Linda's parents did not attend college so it was important to them that she had the opportunity to do so. Her mother encouraged her to be a teacher because, after all that was a good profession for women. Then during her first semester at Bryn Mawr College, a small women's liberal arts college near Philadelphia, she learned that she could choose any profession she was interested in. Her aunt and uncle were in the medical profession so she decided to pursue a career in medicine as well and focus her attention on studying to be a physician. She faced a lot of challenges on her journey to becoming a successful physician. It began with getting accepted to medical school. The first time she applied she was not accepted anywhere but looking back, it was primarily due to the number of applicants at the time and her lack of understanding of the application process. So the next year, she took additional courses, worked in medical related fields and was accepted to several colleges and chose to attend the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania.

During her years at medical school, her father's business took a turn for the worse so she had to take out student loans and work evenings and weekends to stay in school. As you can imagine it was quite challenging and she almost didn't make it through. But with

perseverance, determination and a lot of hard work, she continued to reach her career goals. It took a great deal of focus and planning because in addition to climbing up in her career as a surgeon, she raised three children. In her words “while I was successful in reaching these goals, what I found was that I had to climb higher and up steeper mountains to gain entrance into this elite world, because I am a woman.”

Linda has much to be proud of in her accomplishments. Professionally she has achieved the rank of a tenured, Full Professor of Otolaryngology and Pediatrics and has trained over 100 otolaryngologists during her career, many of whom she still keeps in contact with. For her community she has fought against gender discrimination and most significantly, with the assistance of the Union of University Professionals, corrected an egregious contract violation for salary levels resulting in salary adjustments for hundreds of medical school faculty. Although both men and women benefited from her efforts, it was the women that were the most profoundly affected.

Here she is a successful surgeon, a mother, a wife and an advocate for women. But how does she do it? Obviously, this takes a lot of time, energy and talent. When asked where she finds the strength to keep going even when times get tough as they have for her, she says, “I am a person who has always thrived on a challenge. I don’t like hearing that something “is impossible” or “cannot be done.” I also have an insanely strong sense that my life must have a purpose and I often joke that on my tombstone it should be written; she made a difference.” She continues, “I get very angry when things are not fair and my anger is a great motivator. Sometimes the challenges seem overwhelming and I want to give up, but somehow, when the sun comes up and the morning appears, everything seems possible and I just put one foot in front of the other, put my blinders on, and believe that I am on “the no-option” plan, a favorite saying of a close friend who is also a pediatric Otolaryngologist (with 7 kids!).”

Linda is not only practicing medicine today as a successful surgeon but also focuses on reaching out to other women physicians who have experienced similar inequalities that she has over the years. She continues to be an advocate for these women and her goal is to change the status quo so women will not have to fight for equal pay for equal work any longer.

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