

Sharon Senior: Reach for the stars!

It's always nice to be nominated for something and I was very touched, when earlier this year, my sister put me forward as a role model for the Fylde Coast International Women's Day Festival. If I'm honest, I thought it was one of those online votes (a bit like do you prefer brown or red sauce on your bacon butty and just for the record, neither) and nothing more would come of it. How wrong can you be?

Fast forward to a Monday morning in March when I found myself in a classroom full of 13/14-year-old girls from Fleetwood High School – as a role model I'd been paired with a local school and their mission? To interview me about my career and to write this up to feature in the Hall of Fame at the IWD Festival.

Now, I like to think that I'm a confident person – let's face it; I stand up in rooms full of people and present and love what I do. But I was surprised at how nervous I felt facing these young women. It made me think of the good old imposter syndrome, where we doubt our accomplishments and have a fear of being found out!! This was me – what if they didn't think I was a good enough role model? What if my "go on, I'll have a go at that" career path wasn't inspiring enough?

The next hour whizzed by as they asked me some fantastic and insightful questions; "Could you do your job if you had children?"; "Did you think you would be where you are now when you were our age?"; "Where do you get your inspiration from?" and my favourite; "How much do you earn?".....

I drove away from the school feeling energised and positive and wondered how often as busy leaders we take the time to reflect and take stock of our achievements in this way. I'm not suggesting you put yourself in front of a classroom to do that but it's worth giving it some thought as I was full of it afterwards!

I also offered to run some workshops on the day of the Festival and put together a short session - Reach for the Stars; helping young women consider their ambitions and go for it. I'd handwritten lots of inspirational advice onto stars (thanks to my fab Facebook and Twitter friends for contributing) and strung them across the room, inviting the girls to pick one that meant something to them.

Wow. How humbling was this. I started off by asking them to pair up and share something that they were good at and some really struggled with this. When I asked about the stars they had picked, comments were around "I worry that I won't be any good at it". I got them to reframe this by thinking about what it would be like if they were really good at it. Like the killer question in a coaching conversation, I saw a glimmer of fire in their bellies and really hope that they hold onto that feeling, along with their star.

It was an amazing day and I was proud to have been a part of it – so a big thanks to my little sister for thinking of me and getting me involved. I owe her a bacon butty (without sauce!) #IWD2019

