

# STRONG WOMAN

## *Secrets of being*

### SUCCESSFUL WOMEN OF THE LAW sector their DREAMS and HOW TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

Could you please tell us about yourself briefly?

**Anastasia Simonova:** I am head of the international law practice at K&P Group. I completed my LL.M in International Dispute Resolution at Queen Mary University of London and have been practicing international law for five years. I am currently finishing my PhD and teaching. Besides law, I also love art and fashion.

**Elif Engin:** I am the daughter of parents who encourage me every day to become stronger and chart my own path. After graduating from Galatasaray High School, I completed my law education in Turkish and French at Galatasaray University. In addition to French, the Spanish and Italian languages I learned enable me to improve myself both academically and culturally, and provide an advantage in providing international services to our clients in my own office. I currently represent Turkish and foreign clients under the roof of our law firm EAS Partners, of which I am one of the founders.

**Hanna Roos:** An international disputes lawyer. External professor to help children access life-saving treatments. Parent to two opinionated boys. Owner of a ditsy dog who tries to follow me even to the shower. Explorer: My husband and I sailed across the Atlantic last December. Life-long student: I'm currently learning to surf and to improve my ridiculous doggy paddle swim. My happy place: heating up my parents' wood-burning sauna by a lake in Finland, and chatting with family and friends while at it.

**Tuğçe Ergüden:** I can say that she is her father's girl! I am serious; I'm just as funny and hard-working as my father.

I am a lawyer, but I am involved in mining and energy companies. I serve as a member of our board of directors. Some days I'm in the office in my high heels, other days I'm in the mountains with my dad. If I can find time, I write law books. I travel a lot.

**What does the idea of power mean to you?** **Anastasia Simonova:** I really like this quote: "Having power over others is weakness disguised as strength." Thereal power is within you. I think true strength is the control you have over yourself, over your emotions, the ability to stay strong, and the ability to believe in yourself despite everything that happens. True power is when you never need to prove anything to yourself or others.

**Elif Engin:** Power means having a say. It means using your words effectively enough to create a positive change in the world and being the voice of others when necessary.

**Hanna Roos:** According to my 6-year-old son: "Power means controlling the world."



Hanna Roos

Leaders often control through fear, but I like the definition in *Plato's Republic*, which is one of my favourite books: the essence of power is the ability to do good and to act justly. I became a lawyer because I loved studying Plato and Aristotle during my Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree in Oxford, and went to Cambridge to read Law because it has the capacity to achieve a just society.

**Tuğçe Ergüden:** Social environment! There is one truth in life: the more people you know, the easier things become for you. That's why making new connections is very important to me.

**Do you consider yourself to be a powerful woman?**

**Anastasia Simonova:** Not yet, but I believe that in the near future I will have the necessary skills to become a strong woman.

**Elif Engin:** Actually, the concept of power is multifaceted. I recognize the power within me to inspire change, advocate for issues I am passionate about, and admit my weaknesses when necessary. I think I created my luck by working hard to achieve a good education and professional goals that are compatible with being strong. However, I believe true strength comes from unity and support. While our individual power is limited, we women create unlimited power when we support each other. I feel most powerful when I work to ensure that all women have the same opportunities and when I feel like I can make an impact.

**Hanna Roos:** Yes. When I turned 40, I decided that power comes from speaking with an authentic voice and decided to set up my own law firm and to blog with honesty, hilarity and vulnerability. Feedback from my 11-year-old son: "You have the aura of someone in control."

**Tuğçe Ergüden:** Yes. If I see myself as weak, how can I convince anyone that I am strong?

**Have you ever been in a situation that made you think that 'women' and 'power' are two incompatible concepts?**

**Anastasia Simonova:** I was born in Russia, so I won't lie to you, there are still many stereotypes in our society. However, I had to work at the first Russian law firm opened by a woman named Natalia Kanishevskaya.



Anastasia Simonova

I'm proud. It sets a good example and proves that nothing is impossible.

**Elif Engin:** Fortunately, I have not experienced it personally, but it is important to recognize that throughout history and in almost every society, women have faced challenges when it comes to accessing and using power. My confidence that the social norms and prejudices that cause this will diminish by challenging them and supporting the promotion of social equality increases as I see strong women and men working in this field. While our efforts to challenge this challenge continue to be indispensable to achieve a more inclusive and egalitarian society, women prove time and time again that they are very successful in positions of power and leadership every day, and they continue to be strong and influential figures both in Turkey and in the world.

**Hanna Roos:** Women face what I call the likeability paradox. If a woman is not likeable, she cannot succeed professionally. Think of Hillary Rodham Clinton for example. But in traditionally masculine fields such as the law and surgery, a likeable woman can be perceived as lacking competence and gravitas. The solution: recognise what allows you to be authentically, powerfully you, and surround yourself with colleagues and clients who celebrate that. And never leave the house without your sense of humour and willingness to be vulnerable and ridiculous. Because women's competence is questioned, it's easy to focus on being serious, but actually humour is an incredible power.

Trevor Noah discovered as a teenager that being funny allowed him to be accepted by different ethnic and socioeconomic groups in school – see his excellent book *Born a Crime* which made me both laugh and cry. Which is why Trevor's superpower is now humour. As the fictional character Edwina Sharma says in *Bridgeton*: "Be funny and brave and feeling".

**Tuğçe Ergüden:** Of course, I encountered it. However, the important thing is not to remain silent in these situations. On the contrary, it means making as much noise as possible and saying "I am here and I am strong".

**Which powerful woman do you admire the most?**

**Anastasia Simonova:** I really admire Margaret Thatcher. His quotes are very inspiring and always help me stay strong in difficult situations.

**Elif Engin:** To all the women, especially my mother Ayşe, who strive every day to raise strong and independent women and inspire future generations.



Elif Engin

**Hanna Roos:** A handful of different ones for different reasons. Reese Witherspoon's character Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* and gymnast Simone Biles for trusting their instincts. Michelle Obama; for the power of the hug. Swedish author Astrid Lindgren; for creating Pippi Longstocking, who inspired generations of Scandinavian kids to break the "good girl" paradigm and become suitably renegade. See Greta Thunberg, for example. My mother; A mom to 12 children and a grandma to 17, and for always staying calm. Eleanor Roosevelt; for her incredible tenacity and ability to give love, despite private pain. Taylor Swift;

for claiming the right to be a multifaceted person – not just a narrow brand of country music princess but a pop artist, music writer, producer, film director, cat lover, sister, friend, daughter and investor.



Tuğçe Ergüden

**Tuğçe Ergüden:** I admire every woman who can stand on her own feet and work. Unfortunately, in this era where there are women who do not like to do business and want to become famous or rich quickly, every successful woman is valuable to me. Let me keep what I admire.

**What did you dream of doing when you were a little girl?**

**Anastasia Simonova:** To tell you the truth, when I was little, I dreamed of being a housewife with four children. It's interesting to see how our dreams change over time.

**Elif Engin:** As long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be involved in work where I could contribute to the development of our society. If a little girl has a family that supports her under all circumstances, her imagination and what she wants to achieve are limitless. While growing up, I grew up with the dream of creating an opportunity for every little girl to have this, I hope one day I can make this dream come true.

**Hanna Roos:** Becoming a fighter pilot. I didn't because my eye sight was not good enough. A natural alternative for someone with glasses... an international disputes lawyer, fighting with words rather than planes.

**Tuğçe Ergüden:** Doctor! I can say that it has nothing to do with my current profession.