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Nooyi's mother, in the story, serves as a "toe holder," a term once used by the political adviser Louis Howe to describe his relationship with the four-term President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom Howe never stopped calling Franklin.

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"Hubris syndrome," as he and a co-author, Jonathan Davidson, defined it in a 2009 article published in Brain, "is a disorder of the possession of power, particularly power which has been associated with overwhelming success, held for a period of years and with minimal constraint on the leader." Its 14 clinical features include: manifest contempt for others, loss of contact with reality, restless or reckless actions, and displays of incompetence.