

# **BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO YOUR JOB AND YOUR LIFE**

## **Inspiration Isn't What You Get From Work; It's What you Bring To Work**

**By David Irvine, Best-Selling Author and Leader's Navigator**

*When you are inspired... dormant forces, faculties, and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.*

*—Patanjali*

**A**lthough positional leaders can create an inspiring culture, employees have a responsibility to bring inspiration to their work. But when we are discouraged, our life and work can feel dull, mundane and boring. So how do you find inspiration? Just where does it come from? Here are 12 ways to bring inspiration into your life and work:

**1. Decide to bring inspiration to your work instead of expecting it from your work.** Inspiration is energy, and as such, it cannot be created nor destroyed. It is always there, but we don't notice it amidst the noise and demands of the world. One could say that inspiration – the spirit within – is inseparable from who you are. It doesn't need to be found. The key is to be a receptive conduit so that it can flow through you. We've been taught that we find inspiration outside of ourselves, so we end up looking for it in all the wrong places and wonder why we feel empty at the end of the day. The question is not to ask where to find it, but instead ask, "is the channel open?"

**2. Stay connected to your own sources of inspiration.** Ask yourself on a regular basis, "What inspires me?" Expose yourself constantly to those guides, writers, poets, artists, musicians, story tellers, songwriters, environments, teachers, friends, colleagues - anyone or anything that lights and fuels your inner fire.

**3. Have a purpose, a destiny beyond the drudgery.** In moments of discouragement, we have to be able to reach inside and find that place within that reminds us that we do important work and make an important contribution. What makes you eager to face the day? What inspires you - to learn the extra skills, to put in the extra time, to go the extra mile?

**4. Find - or create – a sanctuary.** A sanctuary is special place for yourself, a place that you call "home," where you can step back from the demands of others, turn off the noise of the world, pray, mediate, tune in to the sound of your breath, and listen to the voice within.

**5. Work with what's at hand.** The goal of inspired living and working is to find fulfilling work. If you can't, then you can chose to do what you are currently doing in a fulfilling way. Inspiration will come when you chose to bring the very best of yourself to whatever is in front of you today.

**6. Shift your focus from getting to giving.** All acts of service beyond ourselves contribute to the whole and keep the stream of energy moving. There is no single act of greatness, just a series of small acts done with great passion and great love. When we stop expecting others to inspire us, and decide to be inspiring instead, we get the energy moving.

**7. Spend time in nature.** While spending time outdoors is a good way to be inspired, you don't have to be outdoors to get

the benefit of nature. A group of employees got together and built a little flower garden on the 38<sup>th</sup> floor of an office tower in downtown Toronto. This little patch of life amidst the concrete inspires everyone who comes in contact with it.

**8. Honor the promises you make.** Maintaining your integrity by being a person who can be counted on can be inspiring. Don't ever underestimate the power of self-respect, a result of being an accountable person. In all my life, I have never been inspired by laziness.

**9. Unplug technology.** Technology is not a good conduit for inspiration. It's a tool, but it's not a good source. Make a point for a few hours a week to turn off the computers or your television or your cell phone. Every once in a while travel in your car with the radio or the stereo off. Try going for walks without your iPod. Unplugging from technology allows you to listen to the sound of your inner spirit.

**10. Create an inspiring community.** Inspiration is often a lonely process but it can't be done alone. Who inspires you – with new ideas and new ways of thinking about things? Who cares about you? Who have you invested in that gives back inspiration? We all need people who remind us that what we do everyday is important and makes a difference.

**11. Live an adventure.** You don't have to climb Mt. Everest to have an adventure. Learning something new, getting out of your comfort zone, traveling to a new culture, going through the discomfort, the awkwardness, and even the humiliation of being a complete newcomer at something and working at developing mastery, are all ways we can experience an adventure.

**12. Find the inspiration in not being inspired.** You don't want to be inspired all the time. If you were, then inspiration would soon become dull. It's okay not to be inspired. Sometimes life is a decision to roll up your sleeves, get the job done, and lift the load of others, without any thought of yourself. Through acceptance, you may find inspiration by admitting that it's okay not to be inspired. Sometimes we just have to ride the darkness of the mundane, even when we can't find a candle to bring some light to the darkness, knowing that every night is followed by a day. There's grace in accepting the mundane as a welcome part of the human experience.

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