

Inspired or Expired: Countering the Gravitational Pull of Mediocrity

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

I'm returning to work this week after some much-needed rest this summer. While looking forward to getting into the swing of work, inspiration to write an article eludes me. So...considering that what I like to write about is what I most need to learn, I thought I'd write an article about inspiration.

When returning to the office after a holiday or simply getting up in the morning to greet a new day, take a moment to ask if you are *inspired* or *expired*? Do you look forward to your life and your work, or do you dread getting out of bed? We all know people who are expired: passed their shelf life in a job and resigned to "doing time"; who have essentially, "quit and stayed."

Gravity is the downward pull that enables life to exist on this planet. But if you don't develop habits that counter the pull of gravity at the physical level, you eventually experience its long-term effects on your body, such as hunched shoulders, compression in your back, joints and internal organs, and tired, sagging muscles.

A pull similar to gravity in the cultures we live in is the pull of mediocrity. Mass consciousness is always toward what is easy, and if you don't have a strategy to counter the pull of mediocrity, you will soon find yourself one day psychologically hunched over, rigid, tense, sagging, and expired - unable to experience the fullness of your potential. Here are six ways to counter the effects of the pull toward mediocrity and help you discover a source of inspiration.

1. **Take 100% responsibility for your inspiration.** Take a look in the mirror and search for the sources of your own inspiration. We are not going to be inspired everyday, but don't blame others because you aren't feeling on top of the world. Maybe you need a simple shift in attitude, a little more rest, or a new set of friends. Regardless, it's your life. Take responsibility for it.
2. **Have a vision.** The pull to the future is a source of inspiration, whether it's a list of inspiring goals, a compelling vision, or a dream. What inspires you to go the extra mile, learn the extra skills, or put in the extra effort? Years ago what inspired me to get up at 5:00 AM to run 10 miles in a blizzard was a dream to qualify for the Canadian Olympic team. The purpose of having a dream is not to achieve your dream, but to inspire you to become the kind of person it takes to achieve it. Whether you are nine or ninety-five, it's never too late for dreams that can lift you out of the pull of mediocrity.
3. **Live a life of service.** Nothing gets you out of self-pity more than making life better for someone else. One sure way to guarantee an uninspired life is the path of self-centeredness. Get out of yourself and adopt an attitude of

gratitude. "*We are, each of us, a miracle. Within every one of us, the pilot light of hope never dies,*" wrote Og Mandino. A sure way to ignite that inner flame is to choose service over self-interest. Concentrating on inspiring others rather than waiting to be inspired, can itself be inspiring.

4. **Know your sources of inspiration.** We all need a well-spring of inspiration such as reading, spending time in nature or in other cultures or environments unfamiliar to our own, exercise or a spiritual practice such as meditation, yoga, or prayer that quiets you and taps into the power of the light within you. Spending a little time each day consciously improving your attitude and growing past your comfort zone, can be inspiring.
5. **Track your energy level.** Be aware of the activities or relationships that energize you and those that consume your energy. Limit television that may be entertaining, but saps your energy. Pay attention to the food you eat: what gives you energy and what depletes you? What activities in your life and work fuel that inner flame? Start making choices that increase your energy.
6. **Be present to life.** Your greatest source of inspiration will always be within you. The best way to access this is to be still, even while you are busy, and present in the present moment. Be here now. Whether it's the beauty of a sunset or a flower, the wonder of a child, or the peace that comes from offering encouragement to someone, if you are mindful, you will discover that life itself is one continuous moment of inspiration after another. Instead of the future or past, inspiration is your experience of being alive, right now.

From the Yoga Sutras Of Patanjali we read, "*When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds. Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world.*"

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