

INSPIRED LIVING or LIVING INSPIRED?

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

“As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.”

—Carl G. Jung

I love being inspired. There is nothing like hearing a story of someone who overcame insurmountable odds and fulfilled a dream. Or being in the presence of great art, athletics, or acting, imagining the years of preparation that went into the expression of a gift of the human spirit. From my own experience, there is nothing so satisfying to the soul, so defining of our character, than to be awakened to a dream and giving our all in the triumph of adversity to fulfill that dream. These kinds of experiences are truly, in Carl Jung's words, what brings light into the darkness of mere being.

As I get older, my perspective on inspired living is changing. Though I will probably always be awed by these experiences of great achievements, I am becoming more and more inspired by the miracle of life itself, of the awareness of the magnificence of this human experience. I am increasingly adhering to Mother Teresa's adage, “we cannot do great things in this lifetime; we can only do small things with great love.” Greatness is not so much about our external accomplishments. It's an inside job, the way we perceive and live our lives. Even in the dream to achieve, it is important to realize that the purpose of having that dream is not to achieve it. The purpose of a dream is to inspire you to become the kind of person it takes to achieve it. Few people will be a gold medalist, but anyone can become the kind of person it takes to win a gold medal.

Here's a short list of what has inspired me lately. My hope is that my list will inspire you to be inspired by what surrounds you daily, if we will take time to stop, notice, and take renewed action.

- A friend and colleague allowed cancer to transform him. After 18 months of a grinding mix of chemotherapy, radiation, and all the other required oncology treatments, Bernie said to me, “Ambitions for achievement in my business, my

drive for financial success... well, let's just say they have been 'radiated' out of me. The only thing that seems to matter these days is love, to notice and value the very small things in my life: being able to put my feet on the floor in the morning, go for a walk in the sunlight, being able to swallow... a deep awareness of what really matters in this existence we call human.”

- When my niece, Lauryn Oates, was 14 years old, she learned for the first time that a regime called the Taliban had come into power in Afghanistan, and had imposed a strange and cruel system of laws over the women and girls of Afghanistan. Her mother cut out a newspaper article about the new Afghan government and left it on her bed. She came home from school, read it and, in her words, “everything turned upside down.” Lauryn has spent the past 13 years working as an activist fighting for women and children's rights in Afghanistan, even risking her life when traveling there.
- While digging through a north Edmonton Dumpster for cans this spring, Geoff Gillespie found roughly \$2,000 in unscratched lottery tickets stashed in a little white garbage bag. The homeless man toyed with the idea of scratching the tickets, or selling them. Instead, he called the Western Canada Lottery Corporation, dug around for enough change for bus fare and dropped them off at the corporation's local office. No reward was offered to Gillespie, and he didn't ask for one. “I just wanted to do the right thing,” he said.

- Recently reading through entries from my past journals, I was reminded about a time when my then young daughters and I would take five minutes at the end of each day to be still and listen to the voice within. Then we would talk about what we heard. Amazing insights would often come through of these moments together. One night, with a smile on her face, Hayley said, “I saw white swans tonight, Dad. They told me that I am here to be the tune in God’s song.” Another evening, she reported, “I saw God and Mother Nature getting married. They had four children and named them Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter.”
- After her divorce, my sister raised three children as a single parent while completing a university education.
- The flowers on our Christmas cactus emerge, giving beauty in my library.
- Watching my grandson learn to talk, to communicate more and more clearly. When you reflect on this for even one short moment, you realize what an absolute miracle this is. He just never gives up. Day after day, there is a longing within him to learn, to grow, to be more of who he is meant to be.
- My oldest daughter, Mellissa, has put her financial ambitions and personal rewards on hold to spend more time with her son. She also knows that as a mother she needs to take good care of herself so she can take better care of her child. As a potter she spends every Saturday at the studio, expressing her creative talents while giving her husband some vital one-on-one time with Ethan.
- My wife and life-partner, Val, through her healing and loving presence makes it possible for all of

us to be more of who we are meant to be. She is the most inspirational person in my life.

Although I am *impressed* by those who accomplish great feats, I am more *inspired* by those who quietly and steadily go about their lives volunteering in their community, standing tall on their inner convictions in the face of the culture, taking up a musical instrument later in life, recovering from an addiction, lying beside a parent while they die, signing a picture they painted that will never be sold, or compassionately holding a loved one who is coming to terms with a terminal illness.

You don’t have to “look” for inspiration in your life like you would a lost piece of jewelry. It will come to you like the sun in a darkened room when you open the drapes. Inspired living or living inspired? Either way, every moment can be an inspiration if you simply open up to the miracle and magnificence that surrounds us all. Inspiration is not a destination. Inspiration is a method of travel.

© 2009 by David Irvine. Permission to reprint and circulate is granted.

David Irvine is sought after internationally as a speaker, author, and mentor. His work has contributed to the building of accountable, vital, and engaged organizations across North America. He is the co-founder of the Newport Institute for Authentic Living whose focus is to build authentic organizational cultures that attract and retain great people. David is the best selling author of five books. His most recent book is *Bridges Of Trust: Making Accountability Authentic*. These are available in bookstores or can be ordered at www.davidirvine.com

For information on how David can bring value to your organization, contact david@davidirvine.com or call 1-866-621-7008 (toll free).