



## **REFLECTIONS** ON INSPIRATION

“Creativity is a means of empowering people to trust themselves and to find new roles in a rapidly changing world.”

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We are often driven to reflect upon our year, our lives, our mentors and our inspiration. What or who inspires us to be the very best that we can be as leaders, and as members of the human race? What causes us to pause for just a moment and look inward to find that special passion? How do we find that inspiration surrounded by troubling circumstances, or faced with the tragedies of the world around us?

Many of us turn to stories of the human condition. There are many great novels, short stories, poems, and films which encompass the human story. Through the study of literature, and the careful exploration of its themes, a reader may reach an epiphany about themselves, and their own individual journey. There is no language that matches prose or poetry in its precise description of human drama, and it is clear that the power of human experience can be extended through reading. Literature asks for accountability to a human community, which is what we need within our learning communities and organizations.

Additionally, through the exploration of the text, we hold a mirror up to ourselves and see many of the things that we need to see. How often have you read a great book or viewed a great movie? What was it about it that made you feel good? Perhaps it did not make you feel good, but the opposite. If it made you feel something, then it achieved its purpose, because it reminded us of what it is to be human and be passionate. This is essential for inspirational leadership.

Another thing you can do to find inspiration is to write. You don't need to be a novelist, but simply put your feelings out on paper in any form. That simple transfer of thoughts from mind to paper can provide crystal clear clarity. Human beings have an amazing capacity for creative thought and behaviour. This creativity is desperately needed for management in the future. The challenge is to find new visions that can change our perceptions, and help us deal with our new realities.

By challenging our thinking styles, through the use of metaphor and other literary elements, we are increasing our capacity for creativity. Both literature and creativity involve an expression of the self. The best way to respond to the current call for creativity in organizational life is to overcome our habitual fear and reticence, and bring our full passionate, creative human souls, with all their urgencies and unnamed longings, right inside the office with us. To be successful at life, one needs to be creative.

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world. In a world where continuous learning and flexible modes of intelligence are of significant importance, we need to work with the leaders of the future to develop a new mindset for seeing, organizing, and leading. Creativity and leadership both represent private journeys with public implications. Both these skills can be developed with effective facilitation. "If given the proper encouragement and support, we are all creative."<sup>1</sup> Creativity is essential for effective leadership development.

A final suggestion is simply to spend some time in nature. Take a walk in the park, through the mountains, or even simply sit in your back yard and observe the things around you. There are many things which may represent leadership challenges and possible solutions. Nature is filled with metaphors for leadership. Margaret Wheatley uses metaphor to explore the new science of leadership. She asks herself what a stream can teach her about organizations:

I am attracted to the diversity I see, to these  
Swirling combinations of mud, silt, grass  
And rocks. The stream has the impressive ability  
To adapt, to shift the configurations, to let the  
power balance move, to create new structures.<sup>2</sup>

She states that lessons are everywhere and that nature is an extended metaphor for leadership. Is there a better way to spend the day than outside enjoying the beauty of nature?

Inspiration is everywhere, but we need to open ourselves to it. Otherwise we tend to miss the little significant messages that surround us every day. Sometimes the answers to our quest are in a story or hidden within the mountain range. Try it, you will be astounded at how inspired you will be!

#### References

1. Hartley, Carolyn Christine. (1999). *The HeART of Leadership: Exploring the Nexus Between Art, Creativity and Leadership*. Masters Thesis. Victoria: Royal Roads University. (p. 9)
2. Wheatley, Margaret J. (1992). *Leadership and the New Science*. Berrett-Kohler Publishers, Inc. (p. 15)

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