



We're All Responsible for Our Own Inspiration

Description

Some weeks back, I was at a facilitated session in which many people had different ideas and solutions. This could have been a difficult meeting, but it went well. I felt this was partly because the facilitator set a solid tone. Yet later one of the attendees said he was disappointed in the facilitator for the person was not inspirational.

The comment brought me back to a time when an organization had asked me to find a speaker on labor law. I arranged for a labor law expert to present to the organization. Later, I called the senior officer to see how it went. She said, "The person was very knowledgeable, but not inspiring." My comment was, "They were there to teach labor law, not to be a motivational speaker."

I get it: At times an outside person can play an important motivational role. Yet who is really responsible for inspiring a person? My conclusion is that, as adults, the primary responsibility for being inspired rests within each of us.

Yes, a book, a movie, a TV show, a preacher, a speaker, a coworker, a boss, a family member, or a community member can be an inspiration. But if one does not act on that inspiration, it can have a short shelf life. When we look for others to motivate us, we miss the opportunity to "own" our attitude. That is part of being an adult.

I was doing a workshop, and during a break, a person came up to me and said, "You're pretty good. I was afraid it was going to be one of those workshops where I fell asleep." I smiled and asked if he was attending the workshop on work time. He said he was. I then asked if he was being paid to be there. He said yes to this too. I then said, "Don't fall asleep on the job. You're being paid to stay awake." While I appreciated the compliment, my point was that one must own their own learning. When I attend any session, it is up to me to learn, find a takeaway, or if nothing is there, to at least practice alertness and patience.

In my workshops, I often use PowerPoints that answer the question "What is an adult learner?" In them I compare adult learners to adolescents. Having taught high school, I have found that many young people lean back in the classroom with an attitude that says, "It is your job to teach; now see if you can." They often see their learning as the responsibility of the teacher. I call them "lean back" people.

The best learners are “lean in” learners. They take ownership of their learning. They know it is their responsibility.

Adults show up on time. They are ready to learn when the session starts. They come back from breaks on time, avoid multitasking on other work during the session, take good notes, create action plans based on what they’ve learned, and share their learnings with others. What inspires them is not the facilitator or presenter—it is their decision to walk away from the session and use what they’ve learned to be better.

People who are self-inspired are not dependent on other people, places, or things for their inspiration. They don’t give away their personal responsibility by saying to others, “You made me do it.” Self-inspired people recognize what makes them tick and what doesn’t. They know their triggers for inspiration.

I feel most inspired when I can be creative and when I can be useful to others. That is me. I discovered this one night when I had finished what I considered to be a great work week. It was also a very busy week, full of travel, hotel rooms, and hard work. Yet I was happy. In holding up a mirror and asking myself, *When am I most inspired?* I realized that during that week I was provided the opportunity to assist cities in getting better, which fed creativity and made me feel very useful.

So here are a few tips for discovering and owning your inspiration:

- Take time to journal each day. Note when you feel your very best. What was taking place? Take time to get to know you.
- Each day write down items you are grateful for. This list will help support your journey to being self-inspired.
- Ask yourself who or what you are depending on to keep you inspired. While it is okay to be inspired by other people, places, and things, do not be dependent on those for your long-term inspiration.

Bottom line: Don’t fall into the trap of depending on others for your inspiration. Self-inspired people tend to get more done and are much more enjoyable to be with. They are also more creative and successful. When we own our inspiration, we make the decision to keep learning and growing and getting better. There is always more to learn, and there are always things we can improve upon. It is a journey we never finish.

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Author

quint-studer