



FALL 2022

celebrate! innovation
magazine

DREAM:

It's Important To Dream

INCREASE YOUR LEADERSHIP IMPACT
By Deepening Your Self-Awareness

CONFESSIONS
Of A Counselor

EVERYDAY HEROES
**Why Storytelling Is Essential
For Imagineering The Future**

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FEATURES

7 | DREAM

It's Important To Dream

BY MITCH MATTHEWS

17 | INCREASE YOUR LEADERSHIP IMPACT

By Deepening Your Self-Awareness

BY SARAH NOLL WILSON

27 | CONFESSIONS

Of A Counselor

BY LINDSEY HAYS, MS, LMHC

37 | EVERYDAY HEROES

*Why Storytelling Is Essential For
Imagineering the Future*

BY DR. ANTHONY PAUSTIAN

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As I type this, the weather in central Iowa today couldn't be sunnier and more beautiful. Yes, it's chilly (42 degrees), with a blustery wind, but the fall leaves blaze in all their glory, topped by a sky of brilliant blue.

Yet we all know what's coming. Soon (likely in a matter of days) the temperature will drop below freezing, the wind will continue (only stronger and colder), and at some point, winter weather will officially arrive, often with snow and ice.

However, that inevitable weather change isn't as bad as it may sound. Yes, the days get darker sooner, and it's nearly impossible (at least for me) not to complain about the change in temperature, but there is a certain stillness in winter that allows for contemplation and anticipation. We may get caught up on indoor tasks we've been avoiding; we may start new projects, or both. And we always look forward with a sense of excitement about what's to come—what we will do once a new year begins, and the seasons once again change on schedule.

One event eagerly anticipated each spring at DMACC West Campus is ciLive!, a day in March filled with speakers and activities that celebrate innovation. This magazine is an offshoot of ciLive!, with content which reflects that intention.

In "Everyday Heroes," Dr. Anthony Paustian takes readers through the concept of imagineering and shares the stories of some who have flourished while embracing that process. Mitch Mathews, author of *Dream Job: Redefined* shares the formula for successful dreaming, one he has explored on his podcast *Dream Think Do* and successfully facilitated at BIG Dream Gatherings across the United States. DMACC West counselor Lindsay Hays identifies barriers to personal development and offers suggestions to overcome them and embrace inspiration. And bestselling author Sarah Noll Wilson, in "Increase Your Leadership Impact by Deepening Your Self-Awareness," offers useful strategies for increasing accurate self-knowledge and successfully applying that knowledge to improve leadership skills and life in general.

So, if you're searching for inspiration while enjoying the waning days of fall, or perhaps anticipating all you might accomplish during the chill of winter, start here. Imagine, dream, become inspired, and increase self-awareness. Use the season

to your benefit while you wait for warm weather to return. And look forward to March 9, 2023, when we will spend a day in celebration of possibility and imagination.



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BIG DREAM GATHERING. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BY MITCH MATTHEWS

DREAM

It's Important To Dream.

We all know that. But we rarely give ourselves permission to do it.

Studies have shown that people who write down their dreams and goals have a much better chance of achieving them. In fact, one study by psychology professor Dr. Gail Matthews found people had a 50% greater chance of achieving their goals if they put pen to paper over those who didn't write down their goals.

Plus, research shows that people are even more likely to succeed if they share updates about their dream journey with a friend.



MITCH SPEAKING AT VALPRO. USED WITH PERMISSION.



MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS. USED WITH PERMISSION.

I have a podcast called *Dream Think Do*, where I've interviewed more than 300 people about achieving dreams, and I can say that I've seen this data play out time and time again.

As it turns out, the formula for achieving big dreams and goals is simple

STEP 1: WRITE DREAMS DOWN and BEGIN.

STEP 2: DON'T GO IT ALONE.

STEP 3: REPEAT.

Science backs this up.

The interviews I've done back this up too.

There's one additional body of evidence that also helps to make this point, something we call, "The BIG Dream Gathering."

THE BIG DREAM GATHERING

These are very special events we've held around the country.

The events consist of people giving themselves permission to dream and then helping each other.

The event is pretty simple. I kick things off with sharing how the BIG Dream Gathering got started. Plus, I share some fun stories of real people writing down their dreams and working to achieve them because who doesn't love a good story, right?

Then we cut everyone loose to think about their dreams, write them down on "dream sheets," and then post them on the walls.

Some people know exactly what they're going to write before they come to the event. but if I'm being honest, most people have NO IDEA what their dreams are when they come through the doors! Many admit they came just because they want to figure them out.

Maybe they have some dreams, but they've gotten buried by busy schedules and obligations. Others will admit that they've pursued some dreams, but they got hit by curveballs or got pulled off track by life's twists and turns.

So they come to be inspired by stories and the other dreams that are hanging on the walls. They need some space and some time to see what old dreams get dusted off and which new dreams bubble to the surface.

As you can imagine, it's always inspiring to see the walls start to fill up with dreams.

When that happens, you can feel the possibility in the room.

Then we ask everyone to go around and offer some encouragement to their fellow dreamers by leaving notes of inspiration, ideas, and offers to help.



LAURA HECHT DELIVERS SCHOOL SUPPLIES TO CHILDREN IN NAKASONGOLA, AFRICA. USED WITH PERMISSION.



CALVIN JOHANNSEN ON ONE OF HIS 75 SUMMITS. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Sometimes the notes are simple. Other notes offer specific ideas and suggestions for resources. And some of the notes include simple or elaborate offers to make connections or pitch in to help.

As you can imagine, it's a powerful experience. Heck, I'd even say it's a taste of heaven.

It almost feels like we're back in a time when neighbors would come together to help raise a barn or lift up a family in need. No agendas. Just real people helping each other.

We've had all sorts of amazing stories come out of these gatherings.

Stories of real people writing down their dreams, and then giving help and getting help.

One example is Chandler Bolt. He was a junior in college when he decided to write a book after attending a BIG Dream Gathering in Chicago. He self-published that book with a friend and it became a bestseller. (Since then, Chandler's written five more bestsellers!)

Laura was an elementary teacher who got hit with the idea of sending school supplies to Africa while attending a BIG Dream Gathering. Thanks to some encouragement and help, she was able to hand deliver a shipping container full of globes, pencils, erasers, and books to kids in Nakasongola, Africa, a year later.

Calvin wrote down several dreams at BDGs over the years. One was to simply "Push and pursue bigger dreams." That broad life goal led to a very specific dream to climb 75 mountain summits in 75 days. He wrote that one down and he started to pursue it. He also spread the word and within two years he'd accomplished THAT dream and



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TOP 15 Best City to Live
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TOP 25 Up-and-Coming Tech Market
— *CBRE, 2022*

TOP 20 Tech City for IT Jobs
— *CompTIA, 2022*

TOP 10 Most Affordable Housing Market
— *GoodHire, 2022*



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summitted 75 mountains in 75 days!
(TO HEAR CALVIN'S STORY, LISTEN TO THIS
INTERVIEW: WWW.MITCHMATTHEWS.COM/093)

Mike was afraid of heights but he posted a dream about skydiving. Three weeks later he got an offer from Groupon so he went for it. He not only survived the experience but LOVED it. (We're not sure Groupon is necessarily the best way to pick a skydiving company, but well done, MIKE!)

Mia was 9 years old when she attended her first BIG Dream Gathering with her mom. While she was there, she posted a dream about writing a book. Afterwards, her mom let me know the encouragement on her dream sheet prompted her to not wait. So that summer, she wrote a book about overcoming the gossip that can happen at school. With some help, she was able to get her book into every elementary school library in her state.

I love that story for so many reasons, but one of the biggest is that it's the ultimate reminder that it's never too early to start dreaming BIG.



MARIA. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Sometimes it's because they can't remember any of their dreams. Other times it's because their "inner critic" starts to hit them with questions.

You get the picture.

We've been hosting these Gatherings since 2006. So I can say without a shadow of a

doubt that there is power in writing down your dreams and sharing them with a few encouraging people.

I mention the BIG Dream Gathering and share these stories for a few reasons:

1. I hope it inspires you as you learn about other people who gave themselves permission to dream.
2. I hope it helps you give yourself permission to dream too.

It's important.

So we're going to do it.

We're going to take the critical (and fun) step of doing some dreaming.

But before we do, I want to share a strategy with you. It might help, especially if there is a part of you that gets a little nervous at the thought of writing down some goals.

It happens. In fact, I see it every time we hold a BIG Dream Gathering.

Some people just start to lock up as they put pen to paper. Sometimes it's because



MIKE SKYDIVING. USED WITH PERMISSION.

they can't remember any of their dreams. Other times it's because their "inner critic" starts to hit them with questions like:

- Is that realistic?
- How could you do that?
- Is that something you REALLY want to do?
- What if it doesn't work out?
- Do you really have the money for that?
- Is that practical?
- When would you have the time to do something like THAT?

Do any of these sound familiar?

If not, congratulations. You are in the 2% of people who don't worry about such things. Good for you.

But if it is something you can relate to, stay with me because I have a phrase that might help.

WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

This is a concept Hollywood relies on.

A "willing suspension of disbelief" is critical for us as we walk through the doors of our local movie theater to watch the latest blockbuster action flick or rom-com.

The term "willing suspension of disbelief" has been defined as a willingness to withhold judgement and suspend critical thought for the sake of enjoyment.

Although directors like Steven Spielberg and James Cameron depend on it daily, the phrase is credited to poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1817, when he was speaking about how powerful writing can allow someone to escape certain realities for a short period in order to enjoy a work of fiction.

A "willing suspension of disbelief" is what allows us to enjoy seeing Robert Downey Jr. build an Ironman suit in his basement overnight and fly it around the world in the morning, when our critical brain would know a team of M.I.T. scientists couldn't do THAT in 10 years.

It's what allows us to believe the beautiful couple in the latest rom-com can look amazing 24/7, even when we all know no one looks THAT good when they wake up!

We do it because it allows us to escape some of the harsh realities of the now. But as Coleridge explained, this willingness to suspend disbelief isn't unhealthy. In fact, this process allows us to engage our mind in thoughts, ideas, art, and theories that help us to see the world differently.

And, I believe these short mental vacations also help us let go of some of our current limitations to be more creative, innovative and alive.

"WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF"

Remember that phrase as you start to dream. So when that inner critic starts to judge the hopes and dreams that start to bubble up, you can shut that voice down.

You aren't being crazy. You're not being irresponsible. You're not being impractical.

You're simply giving yourself an opportunity to dream without limitations.

You can tell that inner critic, "Don't worry. I'm not going to act on every one of these dreams right away."

You can even say, "Don't worry. This isn't the time to plan. That comes later." This is the time to dream!

Let me offer one last story to help hit this point home.

I was working with one of my success coaching clients and taking him through a similar process where he was giving himself permission to write down some of his life goals and dreams.

Before we got started, I brought up the concept of "willing suspension of disbelief" and reinforced the point that this wasn't a time for planning.

I said, "If a dream or goal comes to mind, don't filter it. No matter how big or impractical it might seem . . . don't limit yourself. Don't try to plan it. Just write it down. We'll plan later. Just dream."

I.D.K.

I went a step further and said, if his mind starts to race about how he might accomplish any of the things he writes down, he should write "I.D.K." next to that item.

"I don't know," was to help him remember that now's the time for dreaming and that it was totally fine to not know the plans yet. It was simply a healthy dose of "willing suspension of disbelief."

He took me up on the exercise and brought me back a list the following week. As we looked at it together, I was blown away. There were some big dreams, some simple dreams, and everything in between. There were also a number of "I.D.K.s" next to certain items.

I was proud of him. This kind of list took guts. I told him so.

Then I asked, "Was there anything on the list you were tempted to erase or take off because it just seemed too crazy or impractical?"



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BIG DREAM GATHERING—DRAKE. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BIG DREAM GATHERING—DRAKE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

He paused and looked at the list again. Then a smile broke out across his face. He pointed at one item. It was, “Own a second home in the Northwest.” He said, “I’ve thought about that kind of thing before, but I’ve never allowed myself to write it down. Plus, it really doesn’t make sense for where I’m at right now.”

And it was true. Trying to buy a second home wouldn’t have been wise for him at that point in his life. His business was in flux. His son was getting ready for college. He wasn’t sure he wanted to stay in his current job. BUT, it was still good to put it on the list as a dream.

I reinforced that I was proud of him and excited that he pushed through the mental filtering and wrote it down anyway.

Plus, I added, “When we start to work on plans for some of these dreams, we can keep it on your radar and see where it might fit in over the next 5 to 10 years.”

Later we worked together to build a five-year strategy that he loved. He got back on track with his work. He shifted some things so he could do more of the things he enjoyed within his business and delegated a few things he didn’t. His company started to grow, and he kept working out his plan.

We stayed in touch, but then a few years later he sent me an email.

At first, I thought it was spam. The subject line read: “Check this out,” and there was simply a link in the email. I replied saying, “Hey brutha. I think you got hacked. I received this weird email from you. Just wanted you to know!” He responded in a nanosecond and said, “NO! It’s me. Check out the link. You’re going to love it. It’s my new place in Oregon!”

I clicked the link and it took me to a real estate site that showed multiple photos of a condo right on the ocean. I scrolled through the pictures and a big smile came

over my face as I remembered talking through this dream with him. I quickly got him on the phone and asked for the story.

He said, “Listen. Things with the business have been going really well. But more so . . . ever since we talked about this dream . . . I’ve just had it on my mind. I started to talk with people about it. I took a few trips out there for business and stayed an extra day each time to poke around. I kept getting ideas. Then I was able to find this place through a friend. Believe it or not, I got a really great deal. But more importantly, it’s in a little resort town. I just bought it, but I have it rented out for the next six months. I was worried that it was going to be something I couldn’t afford, but the more I dug in, I realized if I did it right, I might actually make money with it. As it turns out, it’s completely paying for itself already! Heck, I might even make a little money on it!”

I was blown away.

He continued, “I’m so glad I didn’t filter out that dream!”

Then he yelled, “WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF!” into the phone as if it was a battle cry!

I loved it.

So you just never know.

How about you? What if you gave yourself permission to dream?

What if you allowed a little willing suspension of disbelief?

Now’s the time for dreaming. Let’s get to it.

Let’s write some down. Let’s tell a friend or two. Then let’s get to work!

Here are some questions to help!

DREAM QUESTIONS:

(You don’t need to answer these in order. Scan the questions and answer the ones that interest you first. Then come back and answer the others as you go.)

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU’D LIKE TO DO AND/OR EXPERIENCE?

WHERE ARE SOME PLACES YOU WOULD LOVE TO TRAVEL?

WHAT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE IN YOUR LIFE?

WHO ARE SOME PEOPLE YOU WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET SOME DAY?

WHAT DREAMS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR HEALTH AND FITNESS?

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR DREAMS/GOALS FOR YOUR CAREER?

WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR DREAMS WHEN YOU WERE A KID? WHICH MIGHT STILL APPLY NOW?

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR DREAMS FOR YOUR FAMILY?

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR DREAMS FOR YOUR EDUCATION?

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS?

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU WOULD LIKE TO OWN SOMEDAY?

WHERE WOULD YOU LOVE TO BE ABLE TO SERVE?

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR DREAMS FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE? ■

Mitch Matthews has interviewed some of the top business minds in the world for his DREAM THINK DO podcast which is in the top 0.5% of all podcasts. As a speaker and elite coach, he’s spent the last 20 years helping organizations like NIKE, NASA, and Disney to focus, collaborate, and perform at new levels.

Mitch combines powerful stories, practical science, and insightful case studies with proven strategies so audiences can laugh and learn, be inspired and equipped, and leave empowered and motivated.

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BY SARAH NOLL WILSON

INCREASE YOUR LEADERSHIP IMPACT

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“I don’t understand why people don’t feel they can talk to me when they’re having challenges,” Bob, a company’s CFO, said. “I have an open-door policy.”

I could appreciate Bob’s struggle, as the feedback I shared wasn’t easy for him to hear. The receiver of the messenger is just as—if not more—important than the person delivering the message, because they ultimately decide what information is understood and acted upon.



OPEN DOOR POLICY. USED WITH PERMISSION

Juliana, who worked under Bob and managed a team of 12, had told me in confidence that she never felt like she could disagree with him because he became aggressive and defensive. I saw that in action when Bob, Juliana, and I discussed a topic separate from her challenges.

“Why are they coming to talk to you, Sarah?”

Bob then turned his focus to Juliana.

“I mean, you trust me, right? You can talk to me. I’m approachable?”

“Of course,” Juliana said, “Yeah.”

How many times have I held back information from someone, and they walked away thinking they have proven safe and trustworthy?

I didn’t jump in because it wasn’t my place to approach something Juliana had told me in private. There was a reason she didn’t feel safe at that moment, and I knew we would have a follow-up conversation later. I reflected, “How many times have I held back information from someone, and they walked away thinking they have proven safe and trustworthy? And how many times did I make it unsafe for someone to share?”

OUR SELF-ASSESSMENTS ARE FLAWED

Fabio Sala, a leadership researcher, published a 2003 study that explored the

discrepancies between self-assessment and other people's experiences. He assessed more than 1200 people in various leadership positions. He had participants assess themselves, had others evaluate them, and then studied the gaps between perception and reality. He found that when compared with individuals holding lower-level positions, higher-level employees consistently showed a more significant discrepancy between how they viewed themselves and how others rated them. Participants' overall responses can be partially explained by the idea that the more experience we have, the more likely we are to overestimate our competence. It's also a direct effect of power dynamics. People are less likely to give feedback to those in positions of power. That makes sense, right? If you control my wages and opportunities, I will likely be more cautious in giving you feedback.

Positions of power can paralyze perspectives.

The word power is uncomfortable for some people. I work with many high-humility leaders who are uncomfortable when I remind them that they're in a position of power. They often respond, "But I'm just Margaret," or "I'm just like they are."

When you have a title of power, you are in power. You have authority that others do not, and most importantly, you have leverage and influence that others do not. It is detrimental to your impact if your nameplate says CEO, CFO, Director, or SVP, and you ignore or pretend that those letters don't create impact. They do.

I hear you; I know you want to hold onto the idea that you are "Just Margaret." But if you're Margaret the CFO, most people know you're the CFO. You can be "Just Margaret" in every aspect of your life outside the office, but when you control wages, opportunity, and security, you are

more than "Just Margaret." If you have direct reports, you have power over them, whether you want it or not. Ignoring or minimizing your power does not remove that power. And if you are in a position of power, it's more likely that people will hold back or adjust how they share challenging information with you (especially if it is about you).

WHAT IS SELF-AWARENESS?

Most of us significantly overestimate our self-awareness, which means we are very likely to think we're not feeding elephants in the room* when we are, or we assume we are more open to receiving feedback than we might be.

**Wait, Why Are You Calling Them Elephants? I have found that giving people creative and playful language can make it easier to take ownership of difficult situations. Lighthearted language does not mean the work is lightweight, however. When we attach behaviors to shared vocabulary, we can correctly identify instead of accusing. We also acknowledge that these avoidance behaviors are common in using a well-known Western metaphor: the elephant in the room.*

Organizational psychologist and expert in self-awareness Dr. Tasha Eurich studied

Participants' overall responses can be partially explained by the idea that the more experience we have, the more likely we are to overestimate our competence.

5000 people over five years, evaluating each participant's perception of self-awareness against their actual self-awareness. She found that around 90 percent of people said they were highly self-aware. Yet when her team evaluated each participant's behaviors and mindset, the number of genuinely self-aware people amounted to 10-15 percent of study participants.

Dr. Eurich defines self-awareness through these questions:

- How well do I know myself?
- How well do I understand why I do what I do?
- How well do I show up?
- How well do I experience things?

It's a strange little mind puzzle. It's not likely to be adequate to prescribe self-awareness as a solution to the 90 percent of people who believe they're already self-aware. What if, instead of assuming we are highly self-aware, we all acted as if we aren't as self-aware as we'd like to be? Let's take the judgement out of it. There's no award for self-awareness, and we're more likely to be lacking than not.

I know that even though I work hard to be trustworthy and approachable, there's still likely feedback that team members won't share with me. Or they wait until later, and I wonder why they waited so long. Even with all our work, I never want to assume that my colleagues will be 100 percent comfortable being honest with me. I would rather believe they aren't and work harder to gain their trust.

If you truly want to be someone people feel safe with, assume they don't. Then you can take intentional action to change that.

THE VALUE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The way you show up in moments of tough feedback, heated disagreements, and conflicts of values sets the tone for how safe your team members will feel. Saying you have an open-door policy isn't enough to instill trust in your team. I hear this all the time from leaders. I appreciate the sentiment behind this, but I've often felt that by saying you have an open-door policy, you're also implicitly stating that you could close the door at any time. Furthermore, saying you have an open-door policy implies that you wait for people to come talk to you. Stephanie Chin, an incredible leader and project manager, recently shared with me, "Leaders have to go to the people they support."

High-performing and high-value-added teams have consistent characteristics that set them apart from average or lower-performing teams. One of those is a degree of psychological safety. Harvard professor Dr. Amy Edmondson coined the term "psychological safety" in her research on team function as "a shared belief held by team members that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking."

When working with leaders, here's how I describe psychological safety: *psychological safety is the ability to be your authentic self, to fail, to take risks, to disagree, to challenge thoughts, to ask for help—all without fear. In short, it's the antithesis of walking on eggshells.*

Note that having psychological safety is not the same as not having conflict. If a client came to me and said they had no conflict or disagreements in their organization, I'd be concerned. That would indicate nobody felt as though they could "rock

the boat" and show up authentically even in moments of discomfort. Psychological safety is the opposite of this scenario.

Building this sense of deep psychological safety starts with us, the risks we are willing to take, and how we show up when others take risks. We must remember that what each person needs in a situation to feel safe is different. To instill a sense of psychological safety in those around us, we need to seek self-awareness relentlessly. We need to ask for feedback repeatedly. We need to hear it and act.

"When you have psychological safety, all that energy goes to the work. You aren't concerned about which version of the leader will show up," Karen Eber, Leadership and Storytelling Consultant, writes. "We often think there is a big difference between a high-performing team and a dysfunctional one. It is a very fine line. It depends on the ability to practice teaming and psychological safety with each other."

As Eber thoughtfully explained, creating that psychological safety is critical—but it's not always easy. That's because we must start the process by looking at ourselves.



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WHEN IT'S ABOUT YOU. USED WITH PERMISSION.

THE POWER OF TRUST

I hear and trust you when you say you're good, kind, and understanding. Yet even with those beautiful intentions, you will have people in your sphere who don't feel safe sharing feedback with you. You can influence someone's feelings of trust, but ultimately **you don't get to decide how trustworthy you are. The other person does.** And even then, factors like bias can impact how people view you.

If people don't trust you, they're not going to tell you they don't, even when you ask.

So how can we build a culture of safety and trust primarily related to hard conversations? One way is through feedback. Gathering feedback isn't just about getting insights into what you can do new or differently. It's an opportunity to invite someone to take a risk and for you to show them that it's safe to do so. Even if we ask for feedback and someone withholds, how we show up at that moment can create a foundation for them to share differently next time.

Why is this so important?

Simple: **trust and feedback go together.**

We all believe we are safe and open creatures. You will earn your team's trust through the way you receive feedback.

SOMETIMES IT IS ALL ABOUT YOU

So, what happens when the challenge is about you? What if something you did or didn't do contributed to the creation of an elephant? What if no one feels like they can tell you?

In conversations about trust, I'll ask, "How many of you would describe yourself as trustworthy?" And, of course, everyone

Psychological safety is the ability to be your authentic self, to fail, to take risks, to disagree, to challenge thoughts, to ask for help—all without fear

raises their hand—except for that smart aleck who says, "No, I know myself too well; I wouldn't trust me."

As human beings, we overestimate our goodness all the time, and we are all likely to overestimate how easy it will be for others to approach us with feedback or a sensitive issue.

I've never met anyone who says, "You know what, Sarah? I'm good at retaliation. When somebody gives me feedback that is hard to hear, I ensure they never think about doing that again." And yet, anyone who has ever received or delivered "360 feedback" has seen this. Inevitably someone will quickly try to figure out who said what and discredit the feedback or, worse, use it against that person.

Whenever I've had to point out to a leader that their team doesn't communicate because of fear of retaliation, I hear, "Me? But I would never retaliate!" When they say that, it feels true to them at the moment because their conscious brain would never retaliate, but their amygdala-driven brain sure might.

Sometimes that fear of retaliation may have nothing to do with you and may result from a previous experience with

another leader. Most people say—or at least think—that they're nice, so others should be able to bring things up with them. That makes sense, right?

The bottom line? If you've identified an elephant in your midst, the first step is to look at yourself and see how you have contributed.

SOMETIMES IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

You can do several things, and it can still be difficult for your team members to come to you with feedback.

If a team member worked for a leader who didn't receive feedback well in the past, it would influence how safe they feel coming to you to talk about an elephant. They might need extra time to heal and feel secure in their job and relationships before they can have those conversations.

I don't want this to let you off the hook. There are things you are probably doing (or not doing) that contribute to your team's feelings of safety around you. Even if you're sure there are other factors at play, keep doing the work to create an environment where team members can bring vulnerable conversations to you, and that means examining why you show up the way you do.

Accurate self-awareness happens when you understand why you show up the way you do. And that is an entire journey of exploration, not a destination.

It's not enough to know that you have a short temper. You must work to uncover why you have a short temper in certain situations. Look at your values and get curious about what is being challenged when those big emotions start to bubble to the surface. Explore the triggers, the environment, and the relationships.

As human beings, we overestimate our goodness all the time, and we are all likely to overestimate how easy it will be for others to approach us with feedback or a sensitive issue.

I like to think of self-awareness as an action verb—it's something you do, not something you have. It's an identity practice and something you will need to work on for the rest of your life.

BUILD YOUR SELF-AWARENESS SKILLS WITH INTENTIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Time to Get Curious: One highly effective strategy suggested by Dr. Eurich is to engage your “loving critics.” Your loving critics are the people who love you and will tell you the truth. These people are critical to our journey of self-awareness. They understand who we desire to be when we are at our best and can help push us to see where there are challenges and disconnects.

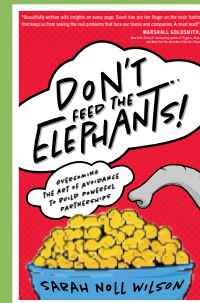
- Who could be your loving critics?
- What do the people who know you the best know about you?
- How might you invite them to share with you?
- What can you do to help those loving critics feel comfortable sharing?

Here's Your Challenge: Conversing with your loving critics can be challenging. Here are a few tips to help you stay engaged, calm, and productive:

- It's ok to experience emotions in this process. Your goal isn't to be stoic. Your goal is to regulate your emotions as best you can. Ask for a break if needed; take ownership of how you are feeling.
- Stick with “What” questions; Avoid “Why” questions. “What” questions help us think more critically and stay focused on the future, which helps us feel more empowered.
- Invest some time crafting quality questions before the meeting if seeking specific insight. Your loving critic may appreciate knowing the questions in advance. These questions might help both of you feel more comfortable throughout the conversation.
- Be mindful of how your loving critic best processes and shares information. While your loving critic might feel best communicating ideas in writing, you might prefer an in-person discussion. Find a balance that serves you both.

Final Thought: True self-awareness is so complex that it took Dr. Eurich and her team a year to define it properly. Give yourself some grace as you push yourself to grow this vital skill set daily. ■

Sarah Noll Wilson is on a mission to help leaders build and rebuild teams. She empowers leaders to understand and honor the beautiful complexity of the humans they serve. Through her work as an executive coach, an in-demand keynote speaker, researcher, contributor to *Harvard Business Review*, and bestselling author of *Don't Feed the Elephants!* Sarah helps leaders close the gap between what they intend to do and the actual impact they make. She hosts the podcast *Conversations on Conversations*, is certified in Co-Active Coaching and Conversational Intelligence, and is a frequent guest lecturer at universities. In addition to her work with organizations, Sarah is a passionate advocate for mental health. Learn more at sarahnollwilson.com.



Accurate self-awareness happens when you understand why you show up the way you do. And that is an entire journey of exploration, not a destination.



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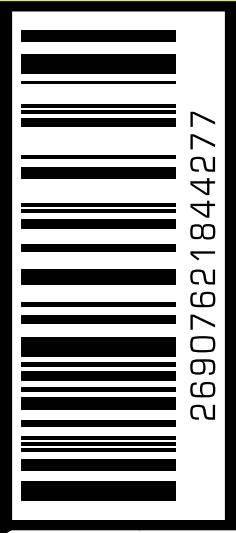
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BY LINDSEY HAYS, MS, LMHC

CONFESSIONS

Of A Counselor

When I used to watch cartoons as a child, I could easily tell when a character became inspired with an idea. That bright yellow lightbulb would go off above their head. Why was it depicted that way? Almost giving the illusion that the lightbulb (aka inspiration) could be turned on or off with the switch of a light. Is this accurate? What if that idea were true?

Lack of inspiration is what stops us from demonstrating the brilliance we know we are capable of achieving. Want to find ways to become inspired? A simple Google search will fill your bucket. From taking a mental health break to regain focus, to reading a personal development book, to immersing yourself in nature, sources of inspiration are plentiful and within your reach.

So let's say you go on an inspirational journey. You may find yourself on vacation, taking in the vitamin D on a beautiful beach with a book that promises to reveal the meaning of life. According to information available online, you should be inspired. Maybe you are. But what if you find yourself burnt to a crisp, cursing your personal development book, spilling your Piña Colada, and thinking inspiration is not where Tripadvisor recommended? Does it almost seem like you are repelling inspiration?

Truthfully, inspiration is all around us. It presents itself to us in different forms. It is found in nature, within social media, amongst colleagues, and within our thoughts. You may not see it, but it is there.

If inspiration is all around and within, then why don't we always feel inspired? There is a simple truth. Once you surrender to this idea, you will feel empowered. I'm just going to say it. The barrier to inspiration is you. Did that hurt just a little bit? It's a hard pill to swallow. The upside to this revelation is that you have the power to switch that light bulb back on. Self-imposed barriers to inspiration can be broken down.

Are you ready to take charge of your mind? It's a powerful concept. Let's take a look at it from a psychological perspective. I would love to take you on a personal development journey and give you a peek into the mind of a psychotherapist. While I always encourage seeking out your own mental health counseling journey, you

Are you ready to take charge of your mind?

can use these concepts to challenge your mind, and the beliefs and behaviors that are holding you back. As you continue to read, take some time to think about each self-imposed barrier and honestly assess where your obstacles lie.

1. YOU DENY YOUR PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS

First of all, I want you to be honest with yourself and assess whether your physiological needs are being met. What do I mean by this? Are you getting sufficient sleep, are you fueling your body with the nutrition it needs, are you moving your body as it is meant to be? I can feel the eyes rolling as I stress the importance of taking care of your body. However, without proper care, your body and mind will not be open to the possibility of recognizing inspiration even if it hits you over the head. Be real with yourself. How you caring for the only body and mind you will ever possess?

2. YOU ALLOW STRESS TO CONTROL YOUR DAY

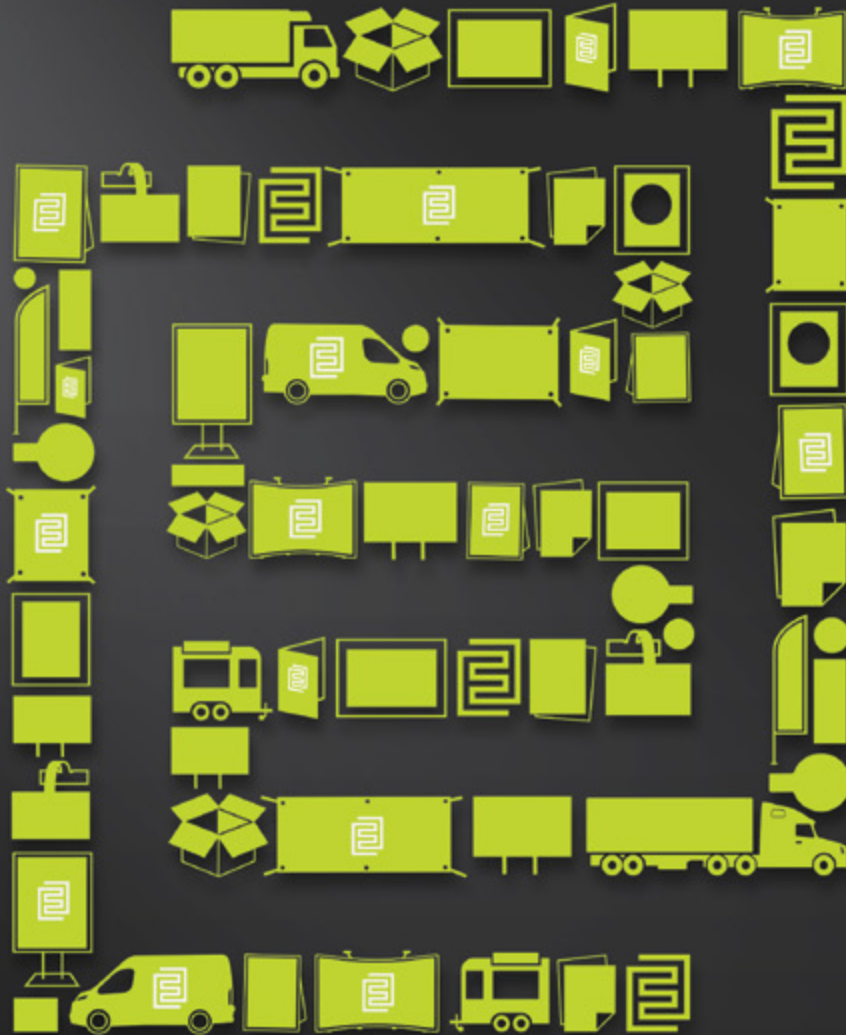
In today's society, stress is almost a sign of achievement. A badge of honor. Some see it as a sign of progress. You may have seen this coming, but I'm going to suggest caring for your mental health. Now that we have physiological needs covered, let's give some attention to the importance of mental health. Talk to a counselor and get a check-up from the neck up. See what I did there? In my practice, I have noticed that most people believe mental health counseling is solely for those

who have gone through a trauma, are depressed, undergoing a big life change with a negative impact, or simply had a bad childhood. Mental health care is beneficial for everyone and especially valuable for maintenance. Allowing yourself to cope with stress and rid yourself of any emotional distress that is holding you back will allow your mind to be open to inspiration.

3. YOU DOUBT YOUR SELF-WORTH

The third concept is one I spend a considerable amount of time on with the college students I serve. Confidence and self-esteem are concepts that continue to be developed through adulthood. If you are looking for ways to build confidence, I would encourage you to find ways you can foster social relationships and contribute to your community. These can increase sense of belonging and create a purposeful existence. I also encourage you to challenge yourself in ways that play to your self-defined weaknesses. For me, this would include public speaking. This is a skill I have had to develop over the past 20 years. My very being tells me to sit in the back, keep my eyes down and pray I'm not required to speak in front of a crowd. I fight this urge and push myself by creating opportunities to practice this skill through teaching and workshops. While I wouldn't qualify public speaking as a natural strength, I would say I've progressed, and I find confidence through those opportunities. Progress is success, and it is crucial you take ownership for your successes.

You may have heard of the term Imposter Syndrome. I must say, this is an issue I've struggled with time and time again throughout my career. Imposter Syndrome is a barrier that can hold



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someone back from believing they have the capability or credentials they need in order to strive for goals and therefore be open to inspiration. To overcome this syndrome, I would first suggest you let go of your expectation of perfection and find progress in failure. Become aware of any unhealthy connections between your feelings and the facts. And please . . . stop comparing yourself to everyone else. You have worked hard to get where you are; it needs to be acknowledged. On the flip side, too much self-esteem can be detrimental. An individual who is overly confident is not open to the idea of self-development. They become stagnant and rarely realize the error. Their arrogance is their barrier to

success. When you increase confidence and self-worth, and overcome irrational thoughts of inadequacy, you will be more likely to be in the right state of mind to accept inspiration into your life.

4. YOU LIMIT YOUR POTENTIAL

The fourth concept I want you to consider is that inspiration is provided to those who are goal-oriented. When one has met their basic needs, created community, and developed a healthy level of self-esteem, an individual can then work toward the goal of self-actualization. At this stage of human development, ask yourself a few questions. Have you realized your

potential? Are you self-fulfilled through personal growth and experiences you create for yourself? Do you have a desire to accomplish new goals? Do you know yourself and your capabilities, and are you willing to push those boundaries? I want to stress the personal component to this challenge. When asking yourself the prior questions, you may have been considering them within a career context, but I also need you to assess your personal life. Are you finding passions, hobbies, and allowing your personality and creativity to flow? In my initial counseling assessment, one of the first questions I ask is “What do you do for fun and what are you passionate about?” The way



STONE PYRAMID WITH BALANCE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

an individual answers this question, both from their words as well as body language, gives me incredible insight into their life, development, and possible areas of growth in order to achieve self-actualization. People who push their potential in all aspects of life are considered to be goal-oriented and can recognize inspiration.

5. YOU PROCRASTINATE

Where you may be sabotaging your success is through the psychological aspect of procrastination. You may find yourself using procrastination as a coping skill for thoughts that lead to fear of success and/or fear of failure. Most

Do you know yourself and your capabilities, and are you willing to push those boundaries?

can understand why an individual would have a fear of failure. It can be a blow to self-esteem, but why would someone be plagued with fear of success? Who wouldn't want success? You can want success and still allow intrusive thoughts to produce procrastination. Someone who struggles with fear of success will use procrastination as a tool to cope. They are fearful of the consequences of

success and what that would mean for expectations of future performances. I'm talking about expectations that are self-imposed as well as from influential people within their lives. So, I'm asking you to take a real hard look at the true reason you procrastinate. Is there an underlying barrier that would otherwise allow you to be open to inspiration?

6. YOU LIVE IN THE PAST

You are not living in the present. Are you finding yourself stuck in the events of the past or worrying about the outcome of the future? You are likely missing what is right in front of you. The present is a gift offered every moment of every day. Planning for

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SUNSET REFLECTING IN BLACK SUNGLASSES. PEACE AND REST CONCEPT. USED WITH PERMISSION.

tomorrow is helpful, but choose to live for today. Today is where you will allow yourself open to inspiration.

I'm a big believer in the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness can be a tool that will allow you to uncover inspiration that has been in plain sight, but you were not truly present to see. My favorite way to practice mindfulness is to take a walk. It's not just the act of walking. It is how I experience the walk. I use my five senses and acknowledge the beauty around me. It could be the freshly bloomed flowers that give off an intoxicating scent. It could be the sound of the birds chirping and the feel of the breeze on my cheeks. When I practice mindfulness, my mind is able to clear out any intrusive thoughts and simply be present in the moment. It's in these moments your mind will be open to

inspiration. Allow yourself the opportunity to practice mindfulness several times throughout the day and see what possibilities await.

Now that we have covered some concepts or tools you can use to explore your self-imposed barriers to motivation and inspiration, I'd like to explore the most powerful of all: your thoughts. Thoughts are part of what makes us human. Our thoughts can help us make simple choices throughout the day such as what to eat for dinner or what outfit to wear. Our thoughts can also give us insight into more personal human nature such as how we feel about the people in our lives or the goals we have. Thoughts can provide motivation and inspiration. We are exposed to inspiration every single day and by nature are thinkers, so where is the inspiration?

The thoughts we have are actually seen through a lens. That is, they are usually subjective. You may view them as accurate but in fact they are colored in a way that allows you to see a situation based on your personal belief system. Your beliefs are the foundation of who you are. They include values and morals but also stereotypes. Beliefs can be accurate but at times inaccurate. Beliefs can be rational and irrational. What does this mean? It means your beliefs could be the very thing holding you back from accurate thoughts.

What is the problem with having inaccurate thoughts and beliefs? The harm comes when inaccurate or irrational thoughts create poor self-image or deter us from our goals. If our beliefs are the foundation to our thoughts, think of your emotions as the product of your

Your emotions can drive behavior. In turn, your behavior has a direct impact on the outcome.

thoughts. Your emotions are personal and individualistic. Your emotions can drive behavior. In turn, your behavior has a direct impact on the outcome.

You may not even be aware of your thoughts. I encourage you to write down as many thoughts as you can for a week. What are the themes? Acknowledge any that pass judgement on your abilities, your personality, your intelligence and so on. In my experience, most of those identified thoughts will be ones holding you back from inspiration. Commonly reported thoughts: “Why try, I will fail,” “I am not deserving,” “I am incapable,” “I am unsuccessful,” and “I am not enough.” These types of thoughts will result in either inaction or poor execution and will certainly create a stone wall between yourself and inspiration.

So how do you create change? You need to challenge your thoughts. Are they true just because you think them? What makes the thoughts true? What makes them untrue? Take a look at them objectively. Making lists will help you visualize any incongruencies. Perhaps there have been times in your life that support the validity of the thought. There are likely other times that suggest otherwise. Once you clearly see the thought for what it truly is, create a new statement, an accurate one. For example, if you take the thought of “I am unsuccessful” and acknowledge the times where you have succeeded in the past, you can easily say “I can succeed.” These new, accurate thoughts are ones you need

to continue to nurture. These statements need to be said often. It can be extremely beneficial to repeat these statements while looking at a reflection of yourself in the mirror. This is not an overnight fix. This is a practice you will need to continue to do daily, even when your feelings disagree with your new thoughts. Your brain needs time to develop new beliefs and therefore thoughts. Eventually your feelings will catch up to your thoughts.

There is so much in life that is out of our control. The phrases “That’s life” and “It is what it is” get thrown around, and one is expected to go in peace. While there is truth to these statements, I feel it can create laziness and helplessness. We become complacent. While we don’t have control in all aspects of our environments, we can choose how to respond. Your response will dictate the outcome. You can choose to be open to inspiration.

Lindsey Hays is a licensed mental health therapist specializing in the development of students within higher education. Her expertise lies in the treatment of depression and anxiety, family and relationship conflict, victims of sexual violence, addiction, stress management as well as major life transitions. Lindsey completed her Master of Science in Counseling through Drake University and has worked with a variety of populations in her 15 years of counseling experience.

While I will never deny you a relaxing vacation in paradise, you don’t need one in order to become inspired. You can either choose to live as if luck and inspiration only exist as one or you can choose to confront the ways you may be creating self-imposed barriers to becoming inspired. Even lucky people need to play the lottery to hit the jackpot. Take the risk, break down those barriers and allow the brilliance you are capable of to shine through. Be a legend. This is your life. Make each inspirational moment count. ■



AMBITION AND LEADERSHIP CONCEPT. USED WITH PERMISSION.



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JOHN DE LANCIE SPEAKING AT ciLIVE 13. USED WITH PERMISSION.

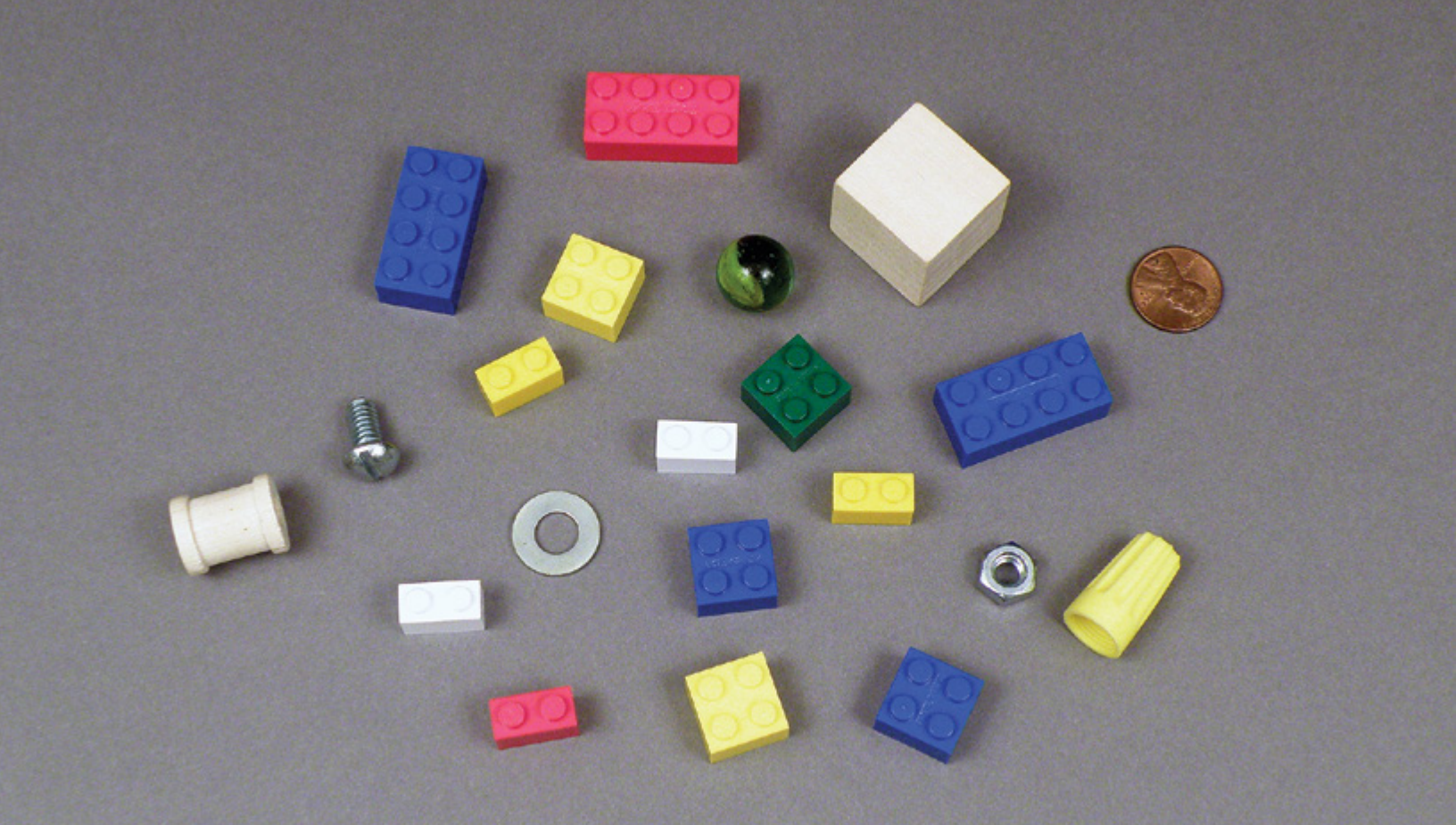


BY DR. ANTHONY PAUSTIAN

EVERYDAY HEROES

Why Storytelling Is Essential For Imagineering the Future

During a recent conversation I had with John de Lancie (who played the omnipotent Q on Star Trek: The Next Generation and reprised the role for Star Trek: Picard), I asked the question I always ask, “How do you get yourself into a creative mindset?”



EXAMPLE OF ITEMS USED IN DIVIDE EXERCISE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

After a short, deliberate pause, de Lancie answered, “Early on, I realized being in a state of creativity always made me feel the best, so I’ve applied it to everything throughout life. Once I started thinking about things as infinite possibilities, it kept me from becoming bogged down in minutiae and made me more deliberate in my thinking. Even if in little bits, being creative lightens the experience and helps keep things fresh with some wonder attached to it.”

De Lancie obviously made it a habit to view life through a creative lens. But when hearing these words—deliberate thinking, infinite possibilities, and wonder—my thoughts immediately drifted to my years teaching leadership, management, and marketing to college seniors and graduate students. Over more than a decade, I performed a non-scientific study with those students to determine, using the

words of John de Lancie, how deliberate they were in their creative thinking to see unlimited possibilities.

The students were divided into groups of two with each being given an identical bag of miscellaneous items including some Lego blocks, a penny, a marble, a wire nut, a wooden spool, a nut, a bolt, and a washer. The instructions on the provided solution sheet were simple: *Divide all of the items within the bag into two distinct groups where all of the items fit into one of the two groups. Do this as many times as possible.* I even provided them with their first answer: Legos and non-Legos. Along with the instructions, each sheet contained several lines for their solutions. What I didn’t tell the students was that the number of solution lines per sheet gradually increased from 20 to 80 as they were distributed across the classroom.

An interesting phenomenon occurred. They completed the exercise and came up with as many solutions as possible up to the number of lines provided. In only a single instance out of hundreds did a group go beyond the number of lines on their sheet. Although there were many fully completed sheets ranging from 20 to 80 solutions, once a group filled their respective number of lines, they were done and shifted their efforts to idle chitchat.

Though the instructions were clear, and it was stressed that each group needed to come up with as many solutions as possible, they only worked up to the perceived limits of the exercise, the number of lines provided. Yet, to date, the list of possible solutions exceeds 500. It’s obvious that the students didn’t view the exercise from de Lancie’s perspective of deliberate thinking, infinite possibilities, and wonder, but why?

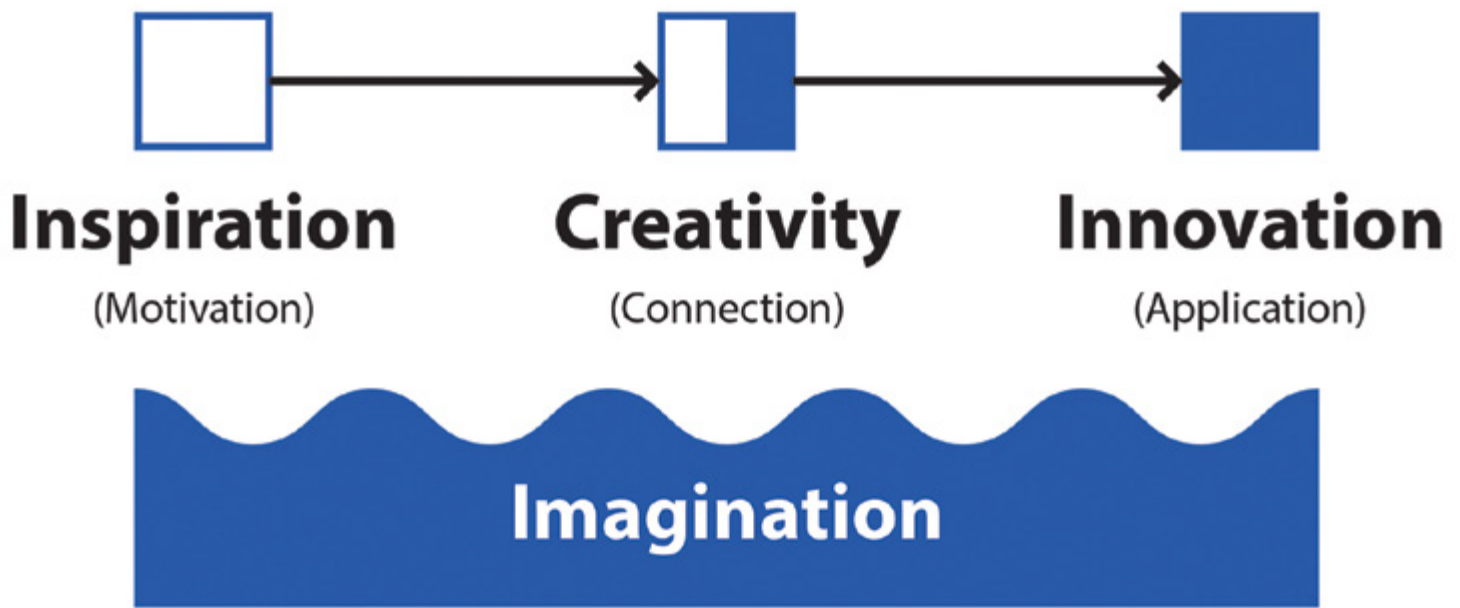


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IMAGINEERING. USED WITH PERMISSION.

The term imagineering is a portmanteau of imagination and engineering. While many people today associate the word with the production team at the Walt Disney Studios, it was first coined by Alcoa Aluminum in their advertising during the 1940s.

The process of imagineering begins with first being inspired to solve a problem (finding motivation), moves to creative thinking (generating new ideas by making new connections), and ends with innovation (applying those ideas in meaningful ways). Imagination (the ability to visualize in the abstract) is the underlying current that flows within imagineering, allowing one to mentally develop a concept into a complete idea and follow through to a fully realized outcome.

In a conversation with Jonathan Frakes (an actor and director best known for his role as William T. Riker on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), I asked him to share the late Gene Roddenberry’s imagineering process and why his positive, creative view of the future became so endearing to fans.

Frakes went on to share how Roddenberry imagineered *Star Trek* but more important, how he looked at life, and ultimately the future, through a trichotomy of vision, technology, and heart. Of those three, vision and technology are the easy parts when looking to the future, but they can’t compensate for a lack of heart—and to create heart, you need great storytelling.

LeVar Burton (an actor and director best known for his roles as Geordi La Forge on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the host of *Reading Rainbow*) added to that by saying, “Gene taught me that all of our heroes are human. *Star Trek* painted a picture of a future through storytelling that I wanted to live in, a place in the future that had a respect for all of life’s diversity and where I was represented.”

Science fiction writers have imagined a future with new technologies, and most of all, heroes we can connect with.

While *The Martian* contained a unique vision of frequent human travel to Mars

and was loaded with references to science and technology, people connected most with the movie’s hero, Mark Watney (played by Matt Damon), through his humor and resolve. *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* featured all types of innovative technologies and a unique, inclusive vision of the future, but the relationships among the characters ultimately made the shows popular with fans—relationships that existed both on and off the screen.

The concept of heroes isn’t limited to science fiction. People connected with the astronauts of the Apollo program, not the innovative technology developed to achieve the program’s vision. The leaders of NASA realized early on that a main part of being an astronaut was serving as a hero to the public—something the agency relied on heavily to keep the space program afloat in uncertain times.

So why didn’t my students see the unlimited possibilities during the exercise? After conducting the experiment with

the same instructions year after year, I modified it so instead of jumping right into dividing the items into groups, I first asked the students to write a story using them. They were asked to be as creative as possible. The items could be viewed literally or metaphorically, representing something totally different, but they had to use them all, and once completed, they had to stand and read their stories to the rest of the class.

Something amazing happened. Almost all of the students had identified one or more of the items as the hero of their story, and their stories had opened their minds to seeing the items with wonder and infinite possibilities. When they were asked to then

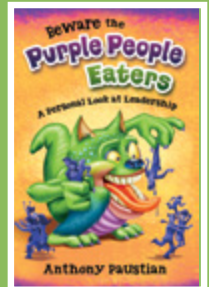
divide the items as before, the outcomes were radically different and without the prior perceived limitations.

Heroes help us open our minds to new ideas. Achieving any kind of future vision requires more than just new technology for it to become a reality. People need to see a place for themselves in that vision, a task that requires great storytelling and the everyday heroes that help create, in the words of John de Lancie, infinite possibilities and wonder. ■

DR. ANTHONY PAUSTIAN IS THE PROVOST OF THE DMACC WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS AND THE AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF FOUR BOOKS. HIS MOST RECENT BOOK, *A QUARTER MILLION STEPS*, HAS WON SEVEN INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS FOR BEST BOOK IN THE AREAS OF BUSINESS, LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, MOTIVATION, SUCCESS, AND COACHING. DR. PAUSTIAN IS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING FOR THE NATIONAL SPACE SOCIETY AND A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO ITS JOURNAL, *AD ASTRA*.

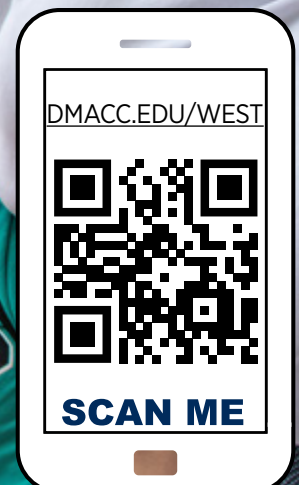
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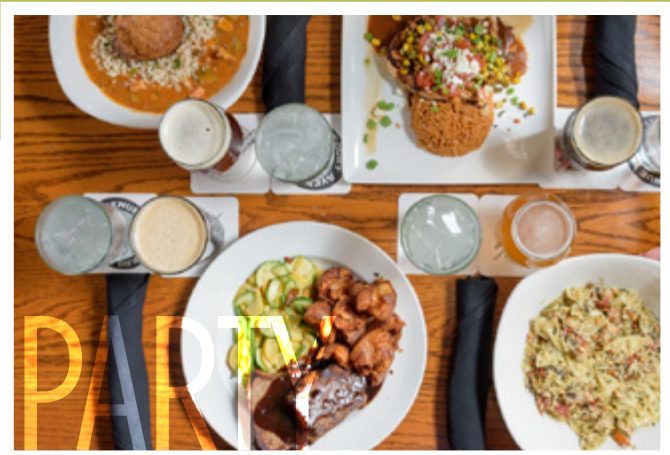
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ANIMATION AND RICH MEDIA

TWO YEARS



Now at the DMACC West Des Moines Campus.

The Animation and Rich Media AAS prepares students for positions in the animation industry. Throughout the program, you will create your own characters, personify objects, generate dynamic motion graphics and more. Apply the Principles of Animation to your unique ideas!



FINISH YOUR AAS DEGREE IN TWO YEARS!

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Students in this program learn from faculty with industry experience in storyboarding, motion graphics and video game animation.

DMACC's Animation program teaches three main animation software packages: Autodesk 3D Studio Max, Autodesk Maya and Maxon Cinema 4D.

The Adobe Creative Suite is also used to create and prepare assets for animation.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

ANIMATION.DMACC.EDU

DMACC
DES MOINES AREA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Life's Calling™



DMACC
DES MOINES AREA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION
Celebrating
50 YEARS

Building on a Firm Foundation

During 2022, we are **proudly celebrating our 50th anniversary**. In our 50 years of service to the students, faculty and staff of DMACC, we have had the opportunity to play a role in the construction of new facilities, the expansion of services and **the education of thousands upon thousands of individuals** pursuing their dreams.

We are fortunate to live in a state that **values the kind of education only community colleges can provide**. We are reminded daily that our community **appreciates what we do** and is **willing to step up** when asked.

For five decades, the DMACC Foundation has provided critical financial support to ensure students had the resources necessary to pursue their dreams.

LEARN MORE: DMACC.edu/Foundation

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