

Ways to Inspire Your People

One of the greatest responsibilities we have as leaders is to support ourselves and others in living at our highest and best. Whether we're parents, partners, friends or leaders, it's incumbent upon us to help others to live as close to their unique potential as we can.

With everything we say and do, we're influencing - positively or negatively - the people we care about. The ideal is to do this with consideration and intention. Here are ten ways you can help others see and realize the best that's within them.

★ Speak to the Mission

Share the vision of the mission (where are we going). Effective leaders have the ability to encourage followers to jump into that experience and work through the many changes that are required to achieve the mission. Every employee, every staff member, every board member should easily and readily know the mission.

★ Believe in Your People

We all have self-doubts from time to time. Our confidence is shaken. We lack the faith in our talents and skills to go for an important promotion or launch a new initiative. Having someone believe in you at these times is priceless. The stories of great men and women are saturated with examples of someone who believed in them even when they didn't fully believe in themselves.

★ Encourage Your People

"You can do it." "I know you can." These are words that are all-too-infrequently voiced. Sincere encouragement can go a long way in helping someone stay the course. The more specific you are, the better the results. "I remember when you got through your slump last year and ended up strong. I'm willing to bet that you'll do even better this time."

★ Expect a Lot

We're often told not to get our hopes up. We're encouraged to have realistic expectations. But when it comes to helping others operate at their best, we sometimes have to up-level our expectations. This can be taken to extremes, but there are many times when a teacher, a parent or even a boss has required more of us than we thought we were capable. And we've risen to the challenge which enabled us to see further than before.

★ Tell the Truth

And tell it with compassion. We often avoid telling the hard truth because we don't want to upset anyone. We want to be nice. But telling the truth is a loving act. You may be the only person who can or will say to another what needs to be said. And you can confront someone without being combative.

★ Be a Role Model

One of the best ways we influence is by our own actions. Who we are speaks much more loudly than what we say. Don't think that people aren't watching you. They are. And they're registering everything about you consciously and unconsciously. We automatically emulate our role models. And we're all role models to someone so let's be good ones. The US Army Rangers have a leadership motto that applies here: "Be, Know and Do", be a leader, be knowledgeable and take action.

★ Share Yourself

Too often, we miss the value of sharing our failings. We don't want to be vulnerable so we hold back. In doing so, we deprive others of our experience, our learning and our humanity. When you share from your own experience - especially your failures - you increase empathy, you're more approachable and you increase your relatability to others.

When you make a mistake immediately acknowledge it and take immediate action to change the decision.

★ Challenge Your People

The word "challenge" has some negative connotations. The meaning we're using here is, "a test of one's abilities or resources in a demanding but stimulating undertaking." We all need to be challenged from time to time. Doing it for another is an art form. Go too far and it will backfire. Go too easy and you will appear patronizing. Remind people of their commitment to being their best and state your challenge. "I challenge you to overcome these unimportant opinions and get on with the real task at hand, get the job done, make the commitment, etc."

★ Ask Good Questions

A good therapist or coach doesn't tell their clients what to do. They ask good questions in order for the client to understand themselves better, to get clear on what the issue is and from there to make good choices. You can do the same. By asking elegant, intelligent questions, you cause people to think and come up with solutions. They'll appreciate it.

★ Acknowledge Your People

You find what you're looking for. If you're looking for the best in someone, you'll see it. If you're looking for their failings, you'll see those. Catch people doing things right and tell them. When we acknowledge the good deeds of others, they tend to do more of them. Write a note. Send a card. Give them a call. Praise them in front of others.

★ Spend Time with Your People

We love what we give our time to, it is said. By devoting your most precious resource (time) to another individual, you're showing them that you truly value them and your relationship with them. Invest time in your relationships; it's what life is made of.