



The power to *INSPIRE* others
exists in *ALL* of us.
We just have to *CHOOSE*
to be *PRESENT* to use it.
- Tanveer Naseer

Have an Inspiring Summer!

By Sheryl L. Loesch,
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It's hard to believe it is summertime in the Middle District of Florida. To us Floridians the start of summer does not necessarily mean the conclusion of the school year for children or the start of vacation time. For us, it means the start of hurricane season! We anxiously listen to the experts' predictions for this season – will there be an unusually high number of storms predicted or a lesser number? Will La Nina or El Nino be in the picture? Should we purchase those long considered hurricane shutters for the house or hold off on this purchase for another year? Do we have enough batteries and candles in the house? What about an old-fashioned corded telephone? Yes, summertime in Middle Florida can be stressful but we Floridians are strong and can handle whatever Mother Nature sends our way, so we do the best planning we can and then take that trip to the mountains or to see family; head to the beach for some much deserved R & R, etc., but above all else, HAVE FUN.

I recently listened to a podcast – for those of you who have never gotten the podcast bug, I highly recommend it! It's a quick and easy way to learn something new or stimulate thinking without involving much of our spare time that is already scarce. If you find a regular podcast you enjoy, there is usually a way you can subscribe and get regular notifications that a new podcast is available for your listening pleasure. If you spend a lot of time in your car in traffic or traveling between divisional offices, you can easily tune in to a podcast to help pass the time during your drive (or your time sitting in I-4 traffic!)

The podcast I recently heard was on the subject of inspiring people. Speaking on the podcast was Kristi Hedges, the author of a book entitled "*The Inspiration Code: How the Best Leaders Energize People Every Day*," We are all leaders in some aspect of our lives and, while listening to this podcast, it quickly became apparent that every one of us can be inspirational to others.

When we think of those people who inspire us (or others), we think of the larger-than-life personality types as those doing the inspiring. We think of people with charismatic personalities. This could not be farther from the truth. I learned that anyone can be inspiration to others. It involves doing small things that are everyday actions. To inspire others, it is first important to develop a connection to them. The author stressed that conversation is what most inspires people and that people prefer the “one-on-one” conversations that are not pre-planned and not forced. The author pointed out that often we can be inspirational to others in ways we do not realize and that our conversations with others may not be all that memorable to us but are meaningful to the receiver.

This got me thinking about all the distractions we have when we try to communicate with each other. Think about how much attention we pay to others during our communications throughout the day – we are challenged with many distractions! When people inspire others with conversation, they focus on the person and make them feel like the most important person. When you think about people you go to for advice, those people are not looking at their phone or looking around when you talk to them – they are looking at you and listening to what you are saying.

During the podcast, the author discussed a four-part code that leads to inspiration in conversations I would like to share with you.

First, be present! Make the person with whom you are speaking your focus – think of them as a blinking red light. When we give our focus, things become more important. Being present is as simple as finding a space to give someone your full attention or stepping away from email. What got my attention was the author’s comment about how having a phone on the table while speaking with another (even if the phone is turned off) changes the conversation. The bottom line – get the phone off the table and out of sight.

The likelihood of being present is more likely if you actually state that to the other person. An example might be, “Our conversation is the most important thing to me for the next hour, so let’s make the most of it.”

The second part of the code is to be personal. We must keep things real in our communication. Authenticity is the gateway to trust. We want to be more of ourselves rather than less. We do this for the sake of building a connection and building trust. The author stated the two most important inspirational characteristics in her research are: 1, that someone listens to us, and 2, that the person speaks with authenticity. People who inspire can recognize the potential in others. They can light up something in people that the people did not see in themselves.

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The third part of the code is to be passionate. Being passionate involves three areas – energy, emotion, and conviction. Passion need not be the same for everyone and people have different ranges of passion. Your energy must match the occasion. Sometimes, you must communicate a little calmer and there are other times when you must be more energized. So, there is a range and a dial, and you must set your dial to a place where you want to take people in your conversation. We should also focus on having or showing conviction in our communications. Conviction often shows up in body language, so you want to align your body language with whatever emotion is included in your message. These non-verbal signals are important to communication.

The fourth part of the code is to be purposeful. Talk about values in your communications with people and wear your values on your outside – showcase them. In the work environment, being purposeful helps us get in touch with the meaning behind our work.

This podcast reminded me to listen differently and to think about being present. Each of us can inspire others. It a virtuous cycle because we say these things and they will come back to us. We regularly interact with others from different backgrounds and even different generations and we have much to learn from each other.

I hope you each have a safe, fun, and inspiring summer!