

# Authenticity

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We are each comprised of two dimensions—our Soul and our Personality. The personality is the exterior by which we are known to others and its engine is our ego. The soul is a deeper, mystical source that connects us to the sacred. The metric we use when working from our personality is *success*—a measure that is *externally* gauged. The metric we use when working from our soul is satisfaction—or what we might call *joy*—a measure that is *internally* gauged. The soul represents our true essence, our internal compass, what we long for and what, if supported generously by the personality, would guide us joyfully, and flawlessly, to what I call our [Destiny, Character, and Calling](#).

Of course, there are not really two separate parts of ourselves—the soul and personality are one. But we live our daily lives by making decisions along a continuum between the personality and the soul. Both the personality and the soul seek, and deserve equally to be honored. When we are inauthentic we may be gratifying the personality, while denying the soul. In other words inauthenticity takes us out of alignment with our deepest essence—our soul. As Freya Madeline Starke phrased it, "There can be no happiness if the things we believe in are different from the things we do."

And there we have the essence of authenticity—it is the capacity and the practice of being in alignment with the deepest desires of the soul.

## **Authenticity: Alignment of the Head, the Mouth, the Heart and the Feet**

How many people do you know who say one thing, but do another? Or who think one thing and then say another? Or who feel one thing, but do another? Or who say but do different things all the time, causing you to think of them as unreliable or inconsistent?

Authenticity is the alignment of head, mouth, heart, and feet—thinking, saying, feeling, and doing the same thing—consistently. This builds trust, and followers *love* leaders they can trust.

An example of inauthenticity is the inability to admit mistakes—to own personal fallibility. Here is where the ego has a very loud voice—not the usual incessant and misleading whispering—but a yelling in our ear of the spurious message that if we accept responsibility for making a mistake, it will make us look incompetent, flawed, and lead to personal loss or hardship, or even reprisals

and punishments—a message of fear. As a result, we listen to the ego and ignore the soul—inauthenticity. The pursuit of careers that fail to ignite passion is another example that leads to living an inauthentic life. These are a few of the many ways the personality exerts influence over our thinking while ignoring the pleas from our soul.

## Motivation Versus Inspiration

We can gain a better appreciation of authenticity when we learn to distinguish the difference between the two words “motivation” and “inspiration.” We often use the two terms interchangeably, as if they were the same, but there is a big difference between the two.

Motivation is something we *do* to people. It comes from a combination of two sources: fear and material rewards or punishments that appeal to the personality. Motivation is seldom about the other person, but more often about *me*. I need to meet my budget, so I am going to motivate all my sales team with incentives, so that they will achieve their sales goals, and if they do so, then I will meet *my targets*. When we are trying to motivate someone, we are typically seeking to alter or control behavior, raise performance standards, or exploit potential. When we come from this position, we are working principally on the personality of the person we are trying to motivate, and we are relying on shaming, bribing, rewarding, threatening, or pressuring—all of which appeal to the primal instincts of fear. Often, too, we use the prospect of being in or out of favor as a motivational weapon. When we use fear in this way to *coach, manage or lead*, the person being coached experiences anxiety and stress.

Most of our modern theory of marketing is based on long-established motivational theories of punishment and reward, derived from the works of psychologists and behavioral scientists such as Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) and B. F. Skinner (1904-1990): “Buy my lotion or you will be ugly.” Our religions are often based on fear: “Join my faith or you will go to hell.” Politics run this way, too: “Vote for me or the other guy will raise your taxes.” Education follows this path: “Pass my exams or I will fail you.” And healthcare: “Follow this protocol or you will die.” The way we run organizations often falls into this same pattern: “Do what I say, or we’ll fire you.” And, of course, performance management (also known as performance appraisal or review) has long followed this path: “Reach these goals and we will reward you; miss them, and we will punish you.” Motivation is extrinsic, relies on fear and material rewards or punishments, and is targeted at the ego or the personality. Motivation often gets things done—but at a price. And that price is

often resentment, anger, lack of trust, and reprisal—all of which leads to inauthenticity—we pretend that everything is OK, while privately seething.

On the other hand, inspiration is intrinsic. It does not come from fear, but from love. It is not about me—it is almost always exclusively about *you*. Great leaders and coaches want to inspire others to grow, to accomplish *their* objectives, to shine, to reach their potential and splendor. The rewards most treasured by these inspiring coaches and leaders come from the joy they experience when helping others to reach *their own* goals or become larger as persons, or make the world a better place. If you think about the leaders, teachers, and coaches who made a difference in your life, they were all people who *loved* you—authentically. They would not have devoted their time and resources to you if they had not felt that way, and to this day, their loving legacy warms your heart.

Motivation is based on a need for each other; inspiration is based on love for each other. Motivation is based on fear; inspiration is based on love. Motivation is ego- and personality-centered; inspiration is soul-centered. Motivation is based on *me*, on serving my needs; inspiration is based on *you*, on serving *your* needs. Although we often use the words “motivation” and “inspiration” interchangeably, it can be seen from these arguments that they are nearly opposite in their meaning and intent. That we use them interchangeably also suggests that our understanding of the difference is weak, and because of this, we are not clear about when to use the one or the other. There is a place for motivation—if the building we are both in catches fire, I am going to motivate you to get out of there! Motivation is lighting a fire *under* someone; inspiration is lighting a fire *within* someone.

We honor the soul by being inspiring and authentic with each other—this is one of the hallmarks of great leadership.

## Authenticity Inspires

As we can see from these arguments, there is a close correlation between a leader who is authentic and a leader who is inspiring. Essentially, they are the same thing.

One of the keys to authenticity is a deep commitment to do work that honors the soul – what Buddhists call “right livelihood”. In the case of my firm, [The Secretan Center, Inc.](#), all of our consultants and coaches are committed to only “working with life-affirming organizations”.

This means we will not accept assignments from makers of armaments and munitions, chemical companies that poison or destroy ecosystems, organizations that conspire to destroy habitat, life or human opportunity, and organizations that collude with murderous regimes. The work we do helps organizations become wildly successful (eight of our clients are on Fortune's Best Companies to Work For in America list, and 30 Secretan Center clients are on Fortune's Most Admired Companies list) and we do not want to make toxic organizations wildly successful. This is our commitment to authenticity.

Another personal example is my commitment to following work that nourishes my soul. I am a passionate skier and I own a home in the Rocky Mountains. For many years we have been running several retreats called Leadership Summits attended by leaders who study advanced concepts of leadership with me while skiing, using the metaphor of skiing as a teaching device ([www.secretan.com/ski](http://www.secretan.com/ski)). Not only are leaders inspired beyond their dreams, but the learning is visceral and changes their lives forever. At the same time this enables me to follow my true to passion and calling—authenticity.

Anything that is excellent comes from a place of authenticity. Find a failing business or profession and you will soon find people who are not being true to their authentic calling, their values or beliefs or their deeply held passions. Find work that is being done brilliantly—in sports, in business, in the arts, education, politics, not-for-profits—any field—and you will find passionate people living with integrity and inspiring others because of who they are—authentic beings.