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## Welcome

Thank you for joining us to explore The Inside Connection. We want to encourage, challenge, and support you to explore your full potential. We believe that success comes most directly when you look inside yourself first, before seeking change from other people or the things around you. If you enjoy our e-zine, please forward it to colleagues, friends and family who might benefit.

## Inside The Inside Connection

This has been one very warm summer here in New York. For weeks on end it was hot, muggy, and uncomfortable. But it's fascinating to me how quickly we forget the old as we change and adapt to different weather. For the last week, we've had rain and cooler temperatures. So now it's long pants instead of shorts, open windows instead of A/C for sleeping, and exercising in the park during the day rather than hiding indoors from the mid-day sun. Seems we have a much easier time changing in response to external conditions than we do in making and sustaining internal change!

This month's article was inspired by some peaceful, reflective time I had earlier this summer. Far away from the heat and humidity of New York City. Hope you enjoy it.

## Sing Your Song

### July 2002

I'm sitting outside the choral rehearsal hall at Camp Ogontz in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. My wife, Elizabeth, is the "voice doctor" at camp this week and she's warming up the participants for their day of singing. She helps them improve their breath control, warms up their vocal cords and wakes them up. But what she really does is infuse them continuously with her passion for singing, her joy of making music, and her essence - which is song.

As I listen, I think of the clients I have worked with and how often the core of our work is to discover a client's personal song - that

work or set of skills that allows each of us to really shine and flow and show off the best of who we are. It's amazing how much work it can be to dig down and rediscover our true talents after lifetimes of making ourselves fit into what others - parents, teachers, spouses, jobs, bosses, organizations - have expected of us.

Recently, I worked with a group of coaches to help them "articulate what they really do." And I'll tell you, that can be a lot harder than it sounds. But in that process, it's clear that when you do "hit upon" your true work and you can articulate that to others, not only does your face light up, but you light up everyone around you at the same time.

If singing your song is what is most important, if it's what you do most effortlessly, if it brings you the most joy and brings others tremendous benefit too - well then why aren't more of us making our own music?

Here are some possible stumbling block that prevent you from conducting your own life symphony:

#### **Trying to please others instead of yourself**

This is one of the most challenging of personal blocks. It's helpful if you realize that you can only hope to please and satisfy others once you have pleased and satisfied yourself. It's impossible to give what you don't have. How could you possibly please someone else unless you have your own personal pleasure to give? This doesn't even begin to address the question of whether it's actually possible to please another person, or whether that's just some social illusion we're all taught to believe in.

#### **Lack of time for reflection and introspection**

One of the greatest challenges for my clients is creating time in their busy schedules for self reflection. There are so many external demands made on our time, that intentionally taking consistent, scheduled time for self-reflection often seems an impossible indulgence. I believe it's much less an indulgence than an unrecognized necessity. When we don't take time for self-reflection and the intentional creation of new responses to situations, we are left with the default response of the best way we've handled similar situations in the past. New, more effective responses to challenging situations require time for processing and reflection. Just as you grow a business more effectively by spending time working "on the business" as well as "in the business," you can grow your life more effectively by spending some time working on yourself.

#### **Discomfort with joy**

Some of us were taught that joy and pleasure are not OK. It can take some time to recover a deep sense of deserving joy in life.

#### **Lack of experience with flow**

Flow is a term described in great detail in Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's book *[Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience](#)*. It describes a state of almost effortless high performance. A sense of being present in the moment and utilizing your potential with ease. As with any other set of experiences that we build into habit, we need to generate enough flow experiences for us to build a base of experience in that state.

Flow is an optimal experience characterized by:

- a sense of playfulness
- a feeling of being in control
- concentration and highly focused attention
- mental enjoyment of the activity for its own sake
- a distorted sense of time
- a match between the challenge at hand and one's skills

### **Fear of failure**

This is a killer! It results in a reduced or blocked ability to learn and adapt quickly to new circumstances or information. Being a committed perfectionist myself, the idea of failing is always hard for me to swallow. Even when I know that failing and making mistakes is the quickest way to learn and move forward to success, it can be hard to accept. Often a conscious commitment to learning, growth and change allows us to take the risks we need, and experience the failures that lead us to success.

### **Fear of our own power**

In Marianne Williamson's powerful quote, *Our Deepest Fear*, she suggests that...

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure."

This fear can be even more damaging than a fear of failure, because it's usually less obvious. My experience tells me that it's easier for us to acknowledge and tolerate failure than it is to truly acknowledge, accept, and use our true potential. We are told to be modest, not to brag, not to get too big for our britches, don't get a swelled head, and so on. Rarely does someone talk to us genuinely about the awesome power and influence that we are capable of generating.

### **Believing that anyone can do your uniqueness better than you... even though that's impossible!**

Many of us don't know - or even value - our unique talents, abilities and strengths. We seem to share some delusional belief that if we can do something easily, then it must not be that difficult. And if it's not that difficult to do, we assume that anyone could do what we do. It's as if our own gifts and talents are invisible to us, even when others notice and marvel at our abilities.

Clearly if you believe that your talents are common, you won't have much incentive to develop or display them. I'd like to assure you that you have unique talents - there is absolutely no one in the world who does things quite like you. Don't let your own ignorance of your abilities stop you. If you can't discover your strengths on your own, go find some observant friends or colleagues and ask them what you do that's unique and special.

### **Poverty of passionate role models**

I remember reading a story a while back about a keynote speaker walking through the halls of a Las Vegas hotel on his way to give his presentation. He found himself walking through a long hallway that was lined with life size photographs of some of our generations most admired celebrities - Elvis Presley, Muhammad Ali, Cher, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Liberace, along with many others. It occurred to him that these were people who - each in their own way - decided to exploit, rather than hide, their uniqueness. They had the courage to be different. In many cases

they ignored or struggled against social convention and were rewarded with fame and wealth by those of us attracted to their talent, passion, and courage.

You might argue that these people had unusually special gifts, and you might be right. But we've all seen "ordinary" people make powerful decisions to really show themselves to others, and the impact is just as extraordinary as hearing Sinatra sing or watching Ali box.

I don't believe we have enough passionate, courageous role models in our life. At least not in our personal, day to day life. We don't get to see the impact that passion and uniqueness bring to life on a regular basis. And we miss the chance to experience authentic success. Authentic success isn't something defined by a Madison Avenue marketing campaign or a TV show - it's our own individual and unique success that each of us needs to define, create, live and enjoy.

Since there aren't enough of these role models to go around... you may just have to take the lead and become one yourself!

#### **Lack of trust**

We all get scared sometimes. But when fear runs so deep that we lose faith in ourselves, in others and in the universe, we lose the foundation that allows us to develop and thrive. Building and maintaining trust can challenge the best of us. When we do trust, we feel confident, powerful and safe. When we fear, we feel scared, cautious and insecure. Which do you think provides the more effective foundation for success?

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One very powerful way to move through blocks like these is to find yourself [an experienced coach](#) - someone who has not only helped others overcome these blocks, but has worked through them personally as well.

We each have a special song to sing - a life to live - that is uniquely ours. If we never discover and share that with others, our talent and uniqueness dies with us and everybody loses. But when we find the courage and support we need to sing our own song, we notice smiles, hear applause, and receive an incredible standing ovation from life.

Make some of your own music this month!

## **Action Steps**

1. Start a list of all the things you've always wanted to do in your lifetime. Don't worry about practicality or even reality, just get going on a long list of goals and projects that you feel passionate about. Once you've got the entire list, then you can look through it and decide what to focus on first. Don't criticise yourself out of your own dreams!
2. Purchase a copy of the book [Now, Discover Your Strengths](#),

read it, and then take the free online assessment that comes with the book. There is a single-use code inside the book jacket that allows you to take the online StrengthFinder profile. Although the book is geared toward producing business results, the ideas are valuable for anyone wondering why it's important to understand and exploit your own strengths.

3. Simply decide to do something you've always wanted to. And don't ever underestimate your power to decide!

## Resources

Books:

*[Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience](#)*

by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

*[Now, Discover Your Strengths](#)*

by Marcus Buckingham, Donald O. Clifton

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