

Heart to Heart – How to lead and inspire!

By Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooley

*“To be a leader means willingness to risk – and a willingness to love.
Has the leader given you something from the heart?”* Hubert H. Humphrey

My friends, it is my privilege to share with you some of what I am learning about leadership and to share what is on my heart.

By this time tomorrow several thousand people, many of them young people, will attempt suicide. Too many, by far will ‘succeed.’ Too many will die of alcoholism or drug related causes, confront their first mental collapse, suffer a heart attack or stroke from excess stress or be pried needlessly from their mangled vehicles. This is a part of our legacy.

Why? Because many of them are already ‘dead’ and just looking for a way to make it permanent. They have lost hope.

Thousands of our fellow citizens are confined to self-constructed prisons of pity, despair and defeat – dungeons of self-depreciation – not realizing that ‘THEY,’ alone hold the key to their own freedom.

In 1988 when my marriage and then my business went south, I took up residence there myself, for a while. But though I am tempted to move back, like I was following the death of my parents in 1999 or following the aftermath of 9-1-1, I don’t live there anymore.

Somehow along the way, our fellow citizens, lost their way, lost their desire for a better life, and saw their dreams destroyed as they watched ‘helplessly.’ Maybe you are experiencing this challenge in your life?

Abused, they no longer laugh or enjoy life. They’ve stopped fighting, surrendered their self-esteem, bankrupt their potential, and have given up. They’ve resigned themselves to a life of mediocrity. Does this sound familiar?

WE CANNOT LEAVE THEM – DYING BY INCHES!

Many years ago, my realization grew that any ‘*real inspiration*, ‘any ‘*real leadership*,’ must come from the heart. And it is only ‘*effective*’ when it is received and embraced by another heart – that is heart to heart.

Like life, inspiration and leadership are precious! Like water on a burning desert, it is sprinkled on dry souls, to moisten parched lips unable to speak, to free your unique voice. To experience, firsthand, the miracle of resurrecting oneself from a ‘*living death*.’

If we were sitting in Starbucks or some other coffee bar we could undoubtedly share for hours about the abuses, afflictions, hardships or challenges we face.

I would however, like to draw your attention to a much more devastating abuse, a common denominator to our deadly despair – ‘*emotional abuse*.’

How many of us have encountered the ‘Dream Killers? Those sometimes-well-meaning people, who judge us, or try to kill our dreams, our futures, by criticizing us – ‘for our own good?’ Who, as the ‘*experts*,’ tell us why it won’t work? They chip away at our self-esteem and would extinguish our pilot light of hope – to see us shackled into conforming, mediocre lives of defeat.

How then, can we defend ourselves against this emotional abuse, especially from those we love and trust?

Let’s explore how we can take a ‘*real leadership role*’ in this battle for the mind and soul of our country and to ‘*leading by example*’ to inspire this around us.

We live in one of the world’s greatest places, and yet our ship of state flounders in seas of red ink, tossed about, its’ citizens abused, abandoned, being driven slowly onto the rocks of depression and destruction. North American’s are losing hope. They are tired of uninspired officials, who do not lead, who have no vision. Canada is by far in more serious shape, although we are seeing some leadership south of the border.

REAL LEADERSHIP IS...about compassion, conviction and courage

Compassion drawn deep from a caring heart, fortified with conviction of purpose, and established by the courage to stand ‘*alone*’ if necessary, in the achievement of a worthy cause, or in battling an injustice. Isn’t real leadership about finding the courage to follow your own dreams, often in spite of the challenges you face in seeking them?

Many of us suffer hurts, a psychic wound that sap our spirit, hinder our leadership potential and in just living our day-to-day lives.

If I could, I would cup each face gently with my two hands, as my mom used to do, look deep into your eyes, your soul, and gently speak to that hurt.

- You are a miracle of God’s creation!
- Your dreams have purpose and value!
- Your dreams are still within your grasp!
- It is never too late to start, again!
- God loves you and believes in you! I believe in you!
- God has given you all the talent and desire you need to succeed!
- There are people waiting to help you succeed – you need only ask!
- You can still do it! I DARE YOU!

Physically, I am not able to do that. But ‘*can I learn*’ to control, to continue taking responsibility and leadership in my own personal battles? Perhaps, in that, to give some inspiration to those I encounter along the way. (*That was my personal challenge, as shared in this speech, for the year 1992.*) That is ‘still’ a worthy challenge for me this year too!

What I am attempting to say, what I am attempting to learn is...'*We don't have to have it all together to lead or to inspire.*' We begin to do so when we begin to care! Inspirational leadership can be as simple as a word of encouragement in passing, in sharing one's struggles and lessons, or in being honest enough to admit our neediness.

I have been repeatedly inspired by my fellow speakers in CAPS & NSA and my fellow Toastmasters to place my hurts aside, to give each audience my best, my all, each time I speak. There were times I arrived at the place I was to speak, dragging my butt...

Together we can lead in this crusade to end and abolish this emotional abuse, banish forever the dark tyranny of our soul. Let's begin today! It begins with you! It begins with me!

Never again will we allow the needless sacrifice of our individual dreams for the '*common good.*' Or see our potential bowing, prostrate before a monument to mediocrity.

My friends, the prison doors are open, they were never locked. I challenge you to alter your attitudes, to purge the poisons of pessimism from your minds and to dare to dream again.

Capture for the moment, if you will, your permanent dream. Hold it clearly in your mind's eye, burn it again deeply into the fabric of your soul. Can you see it? Can you see yourself achieving it?

I can!

Are you willing to share it, to live it, to champion its cause? I dare you to lead, to dream and to inspire those who watch you hoping for a glimpse that they too can follow your lead.

To sum up my thoughts...

When, at first, we realize the truth about ourselves, our dreams; then, we begin to see the truth around us. When we speak in defence of the truth; then, we begin to really lead in this fight for human dignity.

And, when we open our hearts; then, we begin to truly inspire those around us. Canada needs you. North America needs you. I need you!

I challenge you to join me in this crusade. I invite you to make this commitment, right where you are sitting now. Let us serve notice that we are willing to dream, to lead, and to forge our lives into real '*heart to heart*' inspiration.

I dare you!

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