



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.15 THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF CREATIVITY

Creativity is the domain of the Divine and of man at the same time, and spiritual growth naturally supports the conditions in which creativity emerges more fully and more brilliantly.

IN THE MID-1980'S, while William was consulting on corporate creativity, he began to recognise a similarity in the language that people used to describe their moments of creative insight and their experience of spiritual inspiration. It dawned on him that the similarities were not by accident; but rather, it's because our spiritual nature literally means we are co-creators with the Divine...as Martin Buber, a 20th century Jewish philosopher, reminds us:

“Destiny is not where we wait for God to push us. We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions.”

Therefore, creativity is simultaneously the domain of man and the Divine, and spiritual growth naturally supports the conditions for creativity to emerge more fully and brilliantly. But how? Here are some ways we've found through our own experience:

1. **Inspiration.** Spiritual practices such as meditation and volunteer service open us up to a consciousness beyond our own thoughts and self-focused attention. With this openness, we perceive the world freshly, with a “beginner’s mind”, and can hear the subtle voice of guidance from within. This same openness and receptivity allows the free flow of creative *inspiration* within us. For example, in a workshop William conducted with some corporate scientists, a highlight was their realisation that creative ideas actually emerge from the open space *between thoughts*. Therefore, this openness to inner guidance and spiritual inspiration gives us access to a richer variety of creative ideas.

2. **Motivation.** Research by Teresa Amabile¹ has long demonstrated that creativity is most enhanced by intrinsic motivation – not driven by the need for external rewards. Western notions of motivation say that we are “moved” by *needs* (a lack of fulfilment). But according to the spiritual teachings of ancient India, we are always full and complete, lacking nothing, because we have an intimate relationship with the Godhead. Thereby, *motivation* is the natural, intrinsic expression of our full nature. The corporate need for “passionate product champions”, who act to fulfil their own inner calling, relies on this self-fulfilled motivation. When we express the fullness of who we are as spiritual beings, our creativity is most fully released.

¹ Teresa Amabile is a professor of entrepreneurship at the Harvard Business School

3. **Intention.** From our spiritual studies, the goal of most spiritual paths can be summed up as (a) fully experiencing our intimacy with Divinity/dharma and (b) serving others from that experience of oneness. Thereby, the purpose of work is equally twofold: (a) to grow spiritually through our work and (b) to serve others. In this vein, when we expand our goals for creative work to serving others, we expand our access to inner ideas and energy. William once led a group of computer salespeople in a creative process, where they initially set their goal as “making more money”. To stimulate a more expansive level of creativity, he asked them, “Can you express your goal in terms of a customer benefit?” This gave pause to the process, and helped them to see that a goal of serving others opens up new vistas of ideas.

4. **Collaboration.** Spiritual values such as love, truth, peace, righteousness, and non-violence can be found in all major spiritual paths. These values enhance the *collaboration* that is so essential in organisations, where creativity is rarely a solitary venture and requires close teamwork. They provide a climate of oneness while allowing for diversity and individuality. A few years ago, William’s client at HP Labs found that the difference between successful product development teams and truly extraordinary ones was due to the presence of sincere caring and truthful authenticity in the extraordinary teams. Thus, spiritual values can be the foundation of extraordinary team creativity.

From all of this, it might be tempting to make spirituality the next big tool for enhancing creativity at work. But if spirituality is seen as a *means* to that goal, we might then be tempted to discard spirituality if “better” tools are found. However, we’ve found that when we focus on our spiritual growth and allow our creativity to naturally emerge, then we are tapping into the deepest source of creativity itself.

So, ask yourself: *How does my spirituality contribute to my creativity at work? How can my spiritual practices also provide the inspiration for creative ideas?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org