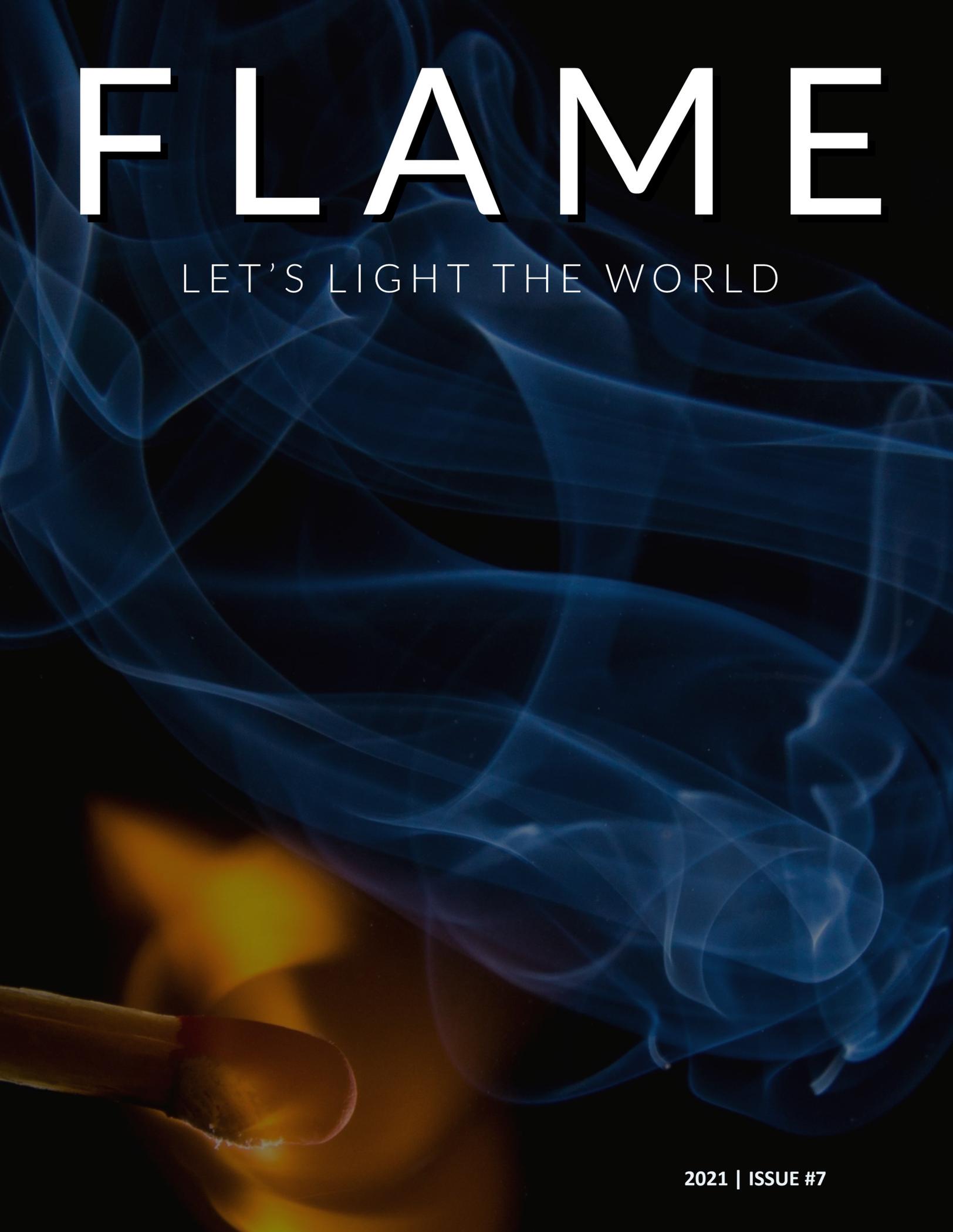


FLAME

LET'S LIGHT THE WORLD



2021 | ISSUE #7

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Message



Friends,

We cook our food and feed a family with a FLAME.

We light the way in the midst of darkness with a FLAME.

We honor fallen champions and heroes with a FLAME.

When we spark a FLAME within our community, our businesses, relationships, and everyday communication, we see results that are profitable, enjoyable and victorious.

F.L.A.M.E. or Faith, Love, Appreciation, Motivation, and Empathy, change the course of the things that matter most in our lives both personally and professionally. We empower our own success and that of those around us when we go to business and life with F.L.A.M.E.

I encourage you to pour into others, and allow wisdom and value to pour into you through the lens of FLAME. Now, please enjoy this edition of FLAME, which is powered by Collaborative Solutions Group, our supervising editor Christina Bartolotta, and all of our amazing contributors!

About CSG

Personal and professional growth only happens after YOU start growing. Taking action is key when your expectations are to fully develop skills and enjoy meaningful results. There are six core elements that we focus on to help you grow in to the best version of yourself. These elements do not exist on their own. Each element influences the others and how you balance these interactions is vital to personal growth...

Opportunities For Growth

1. Growth Events:
2. CSG Private Coaching
3. Club CSG —Group Coaching
4. CSG Online
5. AIM
6. The Master Within
7. Solutions From the Huddle
8. Critical Strategy Guide

FAITH



What is mentorship

What is mentorship?

It's a relationship between two people where the individual with more experience, knowledge, and connections is able to pass along what they have learned to a more junior individual within a certain field. The more senior individual is the mentor, and the more junior individual is the mentee.

The mentor benefits because they are able to lead the future generation in an area they care about and ensure that best practices are passed along; meanwhile, the mentee benefits because they have proven that they are ready to take the next step in their career and can receive the extra help needed to make that advancement.

Do You Need a Mentor?

A mentor can help you advance within your field and connect you with opportunities that you might not have otherwise had access to. This is done by sharing their knowledge, helping you identify opportunities in your path, and potentially opening doors for you when the time comes.

Almost every great achiever in history has claimed that they had a great mentor at some point during their rise to excellence.

Mentorship helps you turn your vision into reality. Mentors guide and advise their mentees. They help their mentees build a successful career or gain a solid footing within a certain organization.

You should find a mentor who has a title similar to one you would like to have one day, or who once worked in the position you have now, so that you will have a common understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as future possibilities. Gaining knowledge from someone who has successfully navigated a similar experience can help you accelerate your growth. Someone who will help you make the right decisions at the right time could influence the rest of your life.

How to Choose a Good Mentor

Start by joining an informal professional network (for example, finding a group with similar interests and experiences through Facebook or Meetup). Or, you can join a formal professional association (which might involve paying fees and attending regulated events).

If you attended college, you can reach out to your school's alumni network to see if former graduates have had success in your field. Then, reach out to see if they are willing to help you improve your skills and seek new opportunities.

Regardless of where you find them, the most important thing is to choose the right person. Do you know what to look for?

What is mentorship

From my experience, a good mentor must possess the following characteristics:

- Extensive experience in a related or relevant field, with a proven track record of success
- Similar educational background
- Has overcome relatable challenges
- Friendly and genuine personality
- Credible and trustworthy character
- Must not feel threatened by empowering others
- Favorably disposed to flexible mentoring styles
- Open to learning from the mentee

You will know it feels right when you have met a good match. You need to feel comfortable with your mentor. You should feel like they have a lot to offer you that is directly related to your field of work. If this is not true within the first few times you meet, it is perfectly ok to end the mentorship. Remember: It's not a failure to move on and seek someone new.

You may want to request a meeting or interview before formally accepting a mentorship arrangement. Keep in mind that both of you will be getting to know one another during this time, and both of you will be accepting your roles—not just you accepting them. Prepare to answer questions about your background and expectations, and make a good impression.

The best mentor relationship works for both you and your mentor. Here are 10 tips for a successful mentorship:

Clarify expectations, for both parties

Let your mentor know what you are hoping to get out of the mentorship. For example, if you're looking for help balancing work and life commitments, let them know that is your specific goal. Your mentor might assume you want advice on moving up in the organization or being a better manager. At the same time, ask your mentor what they want out of the relationship. Many mentors just want to give back since they benefited from a mentor themselves, but they may also have something you can help them with, and it's a great way for you to let them know you want a two-way relationship.

Confirm the logistics

You may prefer live meetings, but this may be too difficult with your mentor's schedule. Ask specifically how your mentor likes to meet. If it's very different than what

What is mentorship

you prefer, see how you can compromise – e.g., by mixing up the meetings. Confirm how frequently you will have scheduled meetings. Confirm if it's okay to email or call in-between scheduled meetings. Don't assume that your mentor likes to meet any specific way or frequency – always ask.

Help your mentor help you

Once you do settle on a goal for the mentorship and a cadence of meetings, you still need to be specific about what you need. Are you looking for encouragement or do you need something more hands-on? Are you looking for ideas and advice? Or maybe you have a specific idea already, and what you really want is to role play or refine how to execute on the idea. Your exact needs will likely differ from meeting-to-meeting or over the span of your mentorship. The more specific you can be, the easier it will be for your mentor to help you. They may be the type who is a natural cheerleader and not realize you want a devil's advocate. Or they may be the type to jump into brainstorming mode and list out ideas, when you already have an idea and want help elsewhere. Help your mentor help you.

Take the initiative in scheduling

When you first meet, you might set a regular meeting day – e.g., last Tuesday of each month at lunch. More likely, you will schedule as you go or You might schedule the next meeting during your meeting. Confirm with the mentor how far in advance they prefer to schedule. Put reminders in your calendar to reach out and schedule according to what you both agreed. If your mentor reaches out to you, be responsive.

Respect your mentor's time

Responding in a timely fashion to your mentor's outreach is one way of respecting their time. Coming to scheduled meetings on time, and sticking to the agenda and time agreed upon are the best ways to respect their time. Showing effort or results in-between meetings is another way of letting your mentor know that time with you is time well spent. You don't have to agree with or act upon everything your mentor says, but there should be some related movement in-between meetings so that the mentor knows your work together is having an impact.

Don't ask for too much too soon

The best mentor relationships do have an impact. Don't expect or ask for too much too soon. In the early days of your mentorship, focus on getting to know each other and on asking for answers to questions the mentor will know right then, with little preparation or extra work. You can then build up to more complex requests, such as feedback on your resume. Keep in mind that mentors warm up at their own pace. If you know the person already, they may be willing to jump right in and look at your resume or business plan at the first meeting. But if you don't know the person at all you

What is mentorship

will want to ease into things.

Have fun

Part of building trust is getting to know each other. Make it part of each mentor meeting to focus, not just on business, but getting to know each other personally. Knowing more about your mentor will help you better communicate and may even give you more or different ideas on how you can collaborate. Letting your mentor know more about you will enable them to help you more effectively.

Keep your mentor informed

Your career is dynamic and changing, and you don't see your mentor that often. You need to keep them informed, when your situation changes in a way that impacts the mentorship. For example, let's say you were matched together a few months ago and have been working on work/life balance issues, but then a spot opens up in your group that you didn't realize you wanted but now definitely do. Let your mentor know, even before the next meeting. This shifts what your focus is, and even if your mentor still wants to talk about work/life balance, at least they'll know you have other things on your mind.

Have a plan for when things go wrong

What if you want to shift the focus of the mentorship but your mentor does not? What if you have taken the initiative to set up meetings, show up prepared, but it's your mentor who isn't responsive? What if there is a change in situation and your mentor no longer fits your needs? Or what if you just have a personality clash? Prepare a heart-to-heart with your mentor. If the relationship isn't working for you, it probably isn't working for them, and clearing the air might fix it or, at least, give you both the opportunity to move on.

Reciprocate and give back

If things do work and you have a successful mentorship, don't forget to pay it back. This includes asking your mentor how you can help them – do not assume that you have nothing to offer just because you're more junior.

Remember, you will only get out of this what you put into it. Your mentor can only take you part of the way; the other half of this requires effort from the mentee.

As the mentee, you must have a clear objective that is specific and measurable. It is not your mentor's job to help you discover what you are hoping to gain from the experience. Then, you must be willing and eager to learn. If you are closed off, you will not be able to grow through the experience. Your mentor will not be able to solve that on their own.

What is mentorship

Mentorship is a two-way process. But if it works the way that it is meant to, both the mentor and the mentee will benefit from the experience.

One day, you might use this experience to mentor someone who is in the same position you are in now. It is important to pass along the lessons you have learned to others, as your mentor has with you. That is how you will continue to benefit and grow from this important relationship—for the rest of your life.



Over the next several months I will attempt to guide you through understanding how to put a great marketing strategy together. As always if you need help, contact me at laura@team-csg.com or pick up the phone and call at 704-699-4099.



LOVE

Sometimes Growth is a Leap of Faith

Any person who has started a business from the ground up remembers the fears and feelings they went through when they go from a business of 1 to a business of many. It doesn't matter if 'many' looks like 2, or 20, or 200. That first step out is a leap of faith. It's a spot where as a business owner, you start to lose a little of the control you once had.

Putting your faith in another person or power beyond yourself isn't just about control. It definitely involves opening yourself up. Opening yourself up to doubts, to fears, and to the potential for disappointment. But sometimes it is just what you have to do to grow and evolve.

About 3 months ago I made the decision that it was time for my business to grow beyond the limits that are placed on it by being a solo operation. I didn't rush right out and hire someone. First I had to figure out the role that I wanted my first hire to play in my business. Then I had to build a plan to bring them on-board in a way that sets them up for success.

The process of planning for the new hire has definitely strengthened my business. It's forced me to challenge and reconcile processes, ideas, habits, and assumptions I have made in the business while operating by myself. It has led me to strengthen the infrastructure in my business and to shore up my own mindset and focus.

I have spent quite a bit of concentration focused on how I will communicate with this person, how I want them to communicate with me. I have focused on expectations, both of them and of myself.

Now, on the eve of my new employee starting (2 business days from when this was written) my business is in a much stronger and sturdier place.

Interestingly, while this process has focused on my business. I find that it would apply to any meaningful relationship in our lives that we want to open ourselves up to and put faith in. First we must start with ourselves and prepare ourselves to be in the relationship with an eye towards what will make the relationship successful. When you are truly prepared, you will find it doesn't feel like such a "Leap."



Matt Swanson is the owner and founder of [MS Digital Solutions](#), a digital marketing agency that focuses on helping businesses make the most of their digital footprint. 15 years in the media industry and experience a variety of marketing roles has prepared Matt for helping businesses understand the possibilities and processes of a strong digital presence. Matt is married to Jen, his wife of 19, and together they have 1 son, Ryan, and live in Mooresville NC.



enjoy
the
little
things

APPRECIATION

Do you have faith in yourself?

It means you choose to have an ‘I’ve got this’ attitude. You see the positive opportunity in every experience, negative or positive. As you look at your core beliefs about yourself, you will see those beliefs mirrored back to you in every area of life from finances, health, success and love. When you have faith in yourself you keep your mind focused on opportunities, the bigger picture, patience, resilience, and achieving. You will strive to feel deeply happy and satisfied in your life. People with faith in themselves deeply believe everything they set their mind to is something they can achieve.

1. See the glass as full.

We are all destined for success and can all get there if we believe we can. We have to put our beliefs in action, and add patience to our commitments. Many people become impatient when their positive thinking doesn’t immediately produce success. That is because positive thinking, not backed by hard work, reduces positive thoughts and diminishes them down, to a wish.

Each of us has the power to choose and to direct our thoughts in any direction we want. Thinking optimistically keeps life flowing forward in the direction of our thoughts because our actions naturally follow our thoughts. For positive thinking to work we cannot passively think and expect miracles. We have to back our thinking with hard work, follow through and determination.

2. Set achievable goals.

To develop faith in ourselves we must experience winning. We need to create a life based on achievable goals set with target dates for their achievement. We tend to overestimate what we can achieve in a year, but underestimate what we can achieve in five years. We need to set goals, explore, plan and achieve something each week. Small achievable goals motivate and inspire us towards our larger goals. Each goal achieved builds confidence and makes the journey towards success enjoyable.

3. Have passion.

People with strong faith in themselves love what they do, and know that what they do spans larger than their own self-interest. It is when we see that what we do makes a positive, and significant difference in the lives of others that we most want to jump out of bed in the morning.

To be successful in all areas of life, you have to love what you do. Waking up to a career you feel no passion for will not provide well for you emotionally, even if it provides for you financially. The growth we can experience, personally and financially will be limited when we feel we are just going through the motions to make money.

4. Be Gracious.

When we live a life of grace instead of entitlement we don’t expect anyone to do the

Do you have faith in yourself?

hard work for us. We do all we can to drive our success forward. Don't be afraid of the hard work needed to succeed. No one owes us anything. There is nothing more career-crushing than an entitled person. They are poor relationship builders, self-centered, tend to bully, and are some of the biggest complainers in the corporate world. We must have patience, be gracious, help others, and ask for help when we need it. We understand that if there are goals to be reached, we must depend upon ourselves to get them done.

5. Hang with other people that have faith in themselves.

We are a direct reflection of the company we keep. Emotions and attitudes are contagious. We must fill our lives with people who are confident, supportive, happy, optimistic, realistic, hardworking and motivated. This type of energy propels our movement forward. We need to make it a point to avoid, or decrease, our interactions with people who are jealous, negative, defeatist or who gossip. We cannot get anywhere when we carry this type of an emotional infection.

6. Perseverance.

Success is always about persistence, determination and the stubbornness to never give up. Setbacks and rejections are a part of any great undertaking, so we must stay driven and optimistic. Rejections and setbacks are what help us explore, grow, solve our problems and increase our knowledge to do better going forward. When we have a winning attitude we see that failures are opportunities, not insurmountable problems. They are the jumping-off point to further success and direct us to the places where we need growth and reinvention.

7. Believe in yourself.

We have to focus on developing and working on our unique strengths in order to develop a strong belief in ourselves. We have to step outside of what is familiar for the sole purpose of increasing our self-knowledge and personal development. There is not a perfect person out there, so we must remain humble and inspired to work on improving our shortcomings, while not punishing ourselves over them. We can learn ways to work with them, such as delegating out, rather than letting these aspects of ourselves bring us down. We have to faith in who we are.

8. Be inspired.

Read. All successful people read. It's amazing the type of inspiration that can come from reading about other inspiring people. We need to spend our time with people who inspire us, and model what they do in their lives in our own lives. Inspiration can be found from family members and loved ones. It is important to look for relationships which inspire us to be better; seek out coaches, therapists and teachers. We can also find a deep sense of inspiration through helping and serving others.

Do you have faith in yourself?

9. Take care of yourself.

Being in excellent physical condition generates a tremendous amount of positive energy. We are a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual being. If our physical body is not healthy it directly decreases our emotional, mental and spiritual health. When we are physically active our bodies produce endorphins that effectively medicate stress, anger or despair. We need to take care of our basic physical needs, not just because it is the source of true wealth, but because it helps us carry a positive vibe about us.

10. Accountability.

We live up or down to the expectations and/or beliefs others hold of us. Those people who express their belief and faith in us, our purpose and our agenda in this world serve to deeply motivate us to continue on our mission with a sense of purpose and passion. The faith and belief to come from others, whether that be our manager, our family, friends, our coach, or those we manage serve to keep us on our toes and move us deeply into our personal commitment to our careers.

The more we gear our thoughts and actions towards success, the quicker we develop success. It isn't about pretending bad times don't exist. It is about focusing our minds on the opportunities which can come from our bad days. When we have an unshakable faith in ourselves we own a deep knowing that we have what it takes to overcome and continue to achieve. Once we achieve consistent positive beliefs in ourselves, our potential exponentially increase. We learn that obstacles are the experiences we need to further train ourselves to grow, remain flexible and move forward with a deeper sense of knowledge. Winston Churchill said, *"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."*



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MOTIVATION

Authenticity is Trending



AUTHENTICITY IS TRENDING

Some of us are walking with a whole new bounce in our step on the other side of 2020. **It seems it is now “in” or trendy to be our authentic selves.** While others think these times have magnified the fact that we were not acting like our true selves before or after the pandemic? Whether you were walking in uncertainty like most of the world or lacking the confidence to reveal who you truly are. The pandemic has made it easier to hide because of the stay-at-home orders and record unemployment. However, the anxiety and stress that comes from the unknown or trauma can make the “real” you appear to the people closest to you.

Whatever your reason, you chose to hide your real self. ***Personal concealment places us into an emotionally unhealthy cycle. First, we feel unsure of ourselves and this causes us to act even less authentic in the future. We may even begin to wonder, which you is the REAL you?***

Rather than spending time hiding from the world, you’ll flourish by revealing your true self to others. Becoming more authentic in your interactions is possible and life changing. **You have to make a commitment to increasing your personal authenticity. Here are some ways that may work for you:**

KNOW THYSELF

- Monitor your feelings closely. You must be self-aware.
- *When you know and understand your own emotions, you’ll be less likely to behave in ways that contrast with your feelings.*

BE PRESENT & MINDFUL

- Stay in the moment and consider what is going on in your world in the present.
- Mindfulness will help you tremendously in your quest to be more authentic.

EXTEND YOURSELF GRACE

Authenticity is Trending

- Take the time you need to respond.
- If you react immediately it will more than likely be emotionally driven.
- Allow yourself some moments to consider the situation and then respond. It could be moments, days or longer. Weigh the consequences and act accordingly.
- If you feel pressure to respond, saying something like, “I’m not sure how to respond to that,” can be your best line of action until you’re more confident in your response.

CATCH YOURSELF IN THE ACT

- When you realize you’ve been less than honest in a given situation, it’s okay to say, “Wait a minute. I changed my mind,” or “Maybe I’m not as sure about this as I thought.”
- ***Remember that you have the right to alter your response to anyone and anything at any time. Then, choose a route that’s more in line with how you honestly feel.***

IDENTIFY YOUR TRIGGERS

- **Notice what situations push you to be disingenuous.** Being insincere or untruthful each time you’re around your in-laws or your supervisor, for example, will reveal where your insecurities lie.
- Self-reflection is very necessary to get to the root of what is triggering you and causing you to change your behavior around that person or situation.

PEOPLE RESPECT YOUR HONESTY

- **Be authentic with others to increase your level of confidence.** The ability to be open and honest shows that you like and accept yourself and you’re self-assured.
- **Avoid being afraid or too timid to show others who you really are.** Self-confidence goes a long way!
- **Realize that others truly appreciate you when you’re authentic in behavior and comments.** Think about how you feel when you’re with someone who’s consistently open with you. It feels comfortable and easy to be with someone you know you can trust. There is no tension or guesswork involved.

BE EMPATHETIC

- **Show care and gentleness toward others.** You might be thinking, “What’s the connection between being caring and being authentic?” ***If you go out of your way to be polite and kind to others, it will be a natural response to be authentic with them.***
- Once you realize that you hold their feelings in your hands, you’ll know it’s nec-

Authenticity is Trending

essary to be gentle and honest with others.

When you expend a little bit of effort on relating to others truthfully and carefully, you'll gradually find that you like yourself more. ***When you offer authenticity to others, it sets a wonderful example for those around you. The more authentic you are, the richer the life you'll live and the better shadow you cast around others. The result of being truly authentic is a level of freedom that is indescribable. It enriches your relationships and your self-confidence.***

Tonia Blackwood is a confidence cultivator, motivational speaker, and seasoned professional with over 25 years of combined corporate and entrepreneurial experience. She is driven to help people tap into the power that lies within them. Her love for recruiting led to coaching employees by empowering and inspiring them to reach their goals. Certified as a Life Coach, specializing in confidence and mindset, she gets to do what she loves every day by training, coaching, and empowering those she encounters. Having a Triumph Story of her own to tell inspired the Arise & Shine: Stories of Triumph Podcast Show where guests share their journey and the God moments that brought them through it. Her focus, to help her clients Reboot, Rebuild & Reclaim their lives because “You can RISE for any situation!” Let’s chat about it, visit www.thenirise.org.



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The image features a dark background with intricate, flowing patterns of light blue and purple, resembling flames or smoke. The patterns are dynamic and layered, creating a sense of movement and depth. The colors transition from a deep blue at the bottom to a lighter, more ethereal purple at the top, with some areas appearing as bright, glowing filaments.

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