



## GROWTH AND INSPIRATION

### INTRODUCTION

As the summer comes to a close we realize that TJJ Summer won't last forever, but that doesn't mean that our TJJ experience has to end. TJJ is only the start to a lifetime of growth. This program will open a discussion about Jewish and personal growth, how to grow, and what happens when the plane leave Israel.

### KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What have you gained this summer?
- What have you learned this summer?
- What are 2 things that you would still like to do/learn/experience?
- What will your life look like when you go home? Will it be any different than before this summer?
  - How can you make sure that the growth you've experienced this summer won't fade away?
  - How can you make sure that you *keep on growing*?

### KEY SOURCES FOR DISCUSSION

*These sources are meant to compliment the article on the next page titled "3 Keys to Getting and Staying Inspired".*

1. Don't wait for inspiration – act!

**Avot 1:17**

וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֲלֵא הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

It is not learning/searching that is most important, but action.

2. Baby steps:

**Avot 2:15**

הוּא הִזָּה אוֹמֵר, לֹא עֲלִיף הַמְלָאכָה לְגִמּוֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶן חוֹרִין לְבַטֵּל מִמֶּנָּה.

It is not incumbent upon you to finish the work, but you do not have the liberty to ignore it.

3. Don't go at it alone:

**Talmud Bavli Berachot 63b:**

אִין הַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית אֵלָא בַחֲבוּרָה

Torah can only be acquired as part of a group.

Concluding Thoughts:

- The Hebrew word חפץ can either mean a desire or a concrete object. Some commentators explain that this is a reminder that to really attain and realize your desires you need to concretize them into something real. Simply a thought, inspiration, ambition, or idea will not last unless you make real.



### 3 KEYS TO GETTING AND STAYING INSPIRED

---

*As counter-intuitive as it may sound, inspiration actually emerges from the soil of action: perspiration is just the water that nourishes it.*



*By Thomas Watson Sr.*

Louis R. Mobley, my mentor and the founder of the IBM Executive School in 1956 was a huge fan of IBM's founder, Tom Watson Sr. It was Watson who invented the famous and often ridiculed THINK posters that were ubiquitous throughout IBM in its early years. Mobley was anything but thin skinned, but he could become downright vehement defending those damn posters against all comers. If the Beatles blamed a lack of "love sweet love" for the world's problems for Mobley it was a lack of reason sweet reason. While he never said as much, the only thing he was really doing at the IBM Executive School was trying to transform shallow thinkers into deep thinkers. Apparently he was successful because he churned out all the deep thinking executives that transformed IBM into the world's fastest growing and most admired corporation during the 1960s and 70s.

Thinking deeply has much to recommend it, but perhaps its most critical value is in dealing with all the ways in which the universe defies common sense. Success in life, and by extension business, often relies on an appreciation for the *counter-intuitive* truths that stud reality. For example, the belief that the sun circles the earth was so intuitive, obvious, and common sensical that it took thousands of years and some very deep thinking to discover that the earth in fact circles the sun.

Similarly, in business it may *seem* like the "obvious" way to boost sales is by cutting prices, but my own company's sales only took off when we became the price leader. It takes a bit of deep thinking to realize that GM and Chrysler were only cheapening their brands through incessant discounting on their way to bankruptcy. Meanwhile sales at companies like BMW were exploding, at least partially, because they were counter-intuitively raising prices instead. Bottled water is now a billion dollar industry because some counter-intuitive, deep thinking genius decided to put a hefty price tag on a commodity that was, and still is, practically free from the tap. (Perhaps it merely demonstrates my age and legendary frugality, but I would probably die of thirst before I'd pay a couple of bucks for a bottle of filtered tap water.)

So what's all this got to do with inspiration? A lot! It may seem that *inspiration leads to action*, but the counter-intuitive truth is that *action leads to inspiration*. For example, very few of us drag ourselves off the couch and off to the gym from inspiration. Instead it is that dissatisfaction dished out by that vaguely familiar reflection in the full length mirror that usually does the trick. Early on our gym experience is anything but inspirational as we battle sore muscles, lethargy, and our tendency to rationalize. But then one day someone comments on our progress, we are flooded with inspiration, and we redouble our efforts. Little by little this self-



reinforcing virtuous spiral of action leading to inspiration which in turn produces more action repeats itself until, *mirabile dictu*, we actually start looking forward to going to the gym.

If you want to get inspired and stay inspired avoid these three common mistakes.

**The first mistake is sitting around waiting for that inspirational moment that will effortlessly lead to all the changes you know you need to make.** Even if that bolt from the blue comes it rarely leads to meaningful action. Inspiration that doesn't result from action quickly fades, and that is why inspirational speeches and seminars are so often belittled as a waste of money.

The counter-intuitive truth  
is that *action leads to  
inspiration*

**The second mistake is refusing to start with baby steps.** A combination of pride and the desire for instant gratification leads to goals that are much too high and therefore doomed to fail. Instead use humility and patience to chip away at the bad habits that you probably spent years developing. For example, if you are habitually late don't resolve to be on time for every subsequent appointment. Instead be on time for one appointment *today*. Trust me, if you can do that you'll quickly be inspired to do it twice and then three times until little by little you are transformed into someone who is always on time. (Full disclosure: I used to be late for everything. Lou Mobley used this approach on me and now I've been habitually *early* for over 30 years.)

**The third and perhaps most crucial mistake is trying to go it alone.** Your first action on the road to inspiration is finding others who have similar goals. A common sense example that is common, sensible, and accurate is that a work out buddy or two makes it 100 times more likely that you will get to the gym, enjoy the experience, and be inspired to go back. In fact, the common denominator doesn't have to be a shared goal- there is no reason why I can't help you get to the gym while you help me be on time. Your support group can be made up simply of people who want to *change*. If we are willing to learn a lesson from the Marine Corps, working with others will teach us that getting and staying inspired is much easier to achieve as a group than as an individual.

While there is magic in inspiration there is really nothing magical about it. Genius they say is 80% perspiration and 20% inspiration. While I like this aphorism, I would take it a step further. Perspiration and inspiration may *seem* like two distinct elements coexisting in the character of genius. But as counter-intuitive as it may sound, inspiration actually emerges from the soil of action: perspiration is just the water that nourishes it. My old Zen teacher was the most inspired and inspiring human being I've ever met. When asked for the secret to inspiration he invariably shrugged and said, "I just put one foot in front of the other and the inspiration took care of itself." At twenty I found his answer profoundly disappointing. I now consider it the most profound thing I have ever heard...