

The Genius Within The Average Person

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I was on a program some time ago with the great John Wooden, former UCLA basketball coach turned motivational speaker and author. Wooden was telling the story of speaking at an awards banquet in Santa Clara, California, where there are a number of tremendous swimmers under the tutelage of the legendary Coach George Haynes.

Wooden turned to coach George Haynes, and asked, “What’s your secret?” After all, the average girl was just over 5 feet tall and weighed only 115 pounds. Even the greatest swimmer in the world in his day, Mark Spitz, weighed only 150 pounds and stood only 5 feet 10 inches tall. Coach Haynes simply said, “come out tomorrow and watch the workouts. You’ll get your answer.”

The next day, Wooden was there and couldn’t believe his eyes. He thought they might come out complaining or acting sluggish. Not so. They burst through the locker room doors with an enthusiasm that would make any coach proud. Never a complaint. Never a negative thought. Nothing but positive vibes. Even the tiny 5-year old kids came dashing from the locker room.

What’s the capacity of a 5-year old? Coach Haynes had those kids believing they would win world gold medals and break world records--records that, for a 5-year old kid, had not yet even been set! *There is genius within the average person.*

“We can’t make the plaques fast enough,” said Coach Haynes. There were 35 world records on the walls of his office at that time and surely there are many more today. The irony is that most of the kids on the swim team or ordinary kids from a very ordinary community, all of which came from the surrounding Santa Clara area. Can you imagine having a swim team that breaks records faster than you can produce plaques? That’s motivation.

I've learned three things about motivation over the years. First, you can't motivate anyone to do anything they don't want to do. Motivation is an inside out job, not an outside in job.

The second thing I've learned is that all people are motivated. People who lay in bed in the morning rather than getting up and going to work are more motivated to lay in bed. They might be negatively motivated, but they are nevertheless motivated.

The third thing I've learned is that people do things for their reasons, not for yours. The trick is to figure out what THEIR reasons are.

I believe the key to Coach Haynes motivation of his youngsters is that he figured out what their reasons were, and he coached them based on *their* motivation, not *his* own. He was able to find the genius within the average person and bring out the best in them.

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