

MATTMCWILLIAMS

Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

How to Encourage Others and Inspire Your Followers

When is the last time someone told you, "I'm proud of you"? Not for what you've done or accomplished but just for being you. If you are like most people, it's been far too long.

Those four words are some of the most encouraging words we can hear. That's why I whisper them to our daughter every night before she goes to sleep.

No matter what she did or didn't do that day, no matter what she accomplished or how she acted, she will hear those four powerful words:

"I'm proud of you."

The Power of Your Words

If you are a leader, your words are magnified. Something that seems of no consequence to you can lift a team member's spirits or crush them. If you are a parent, this power is magnified inflated even more.

Eugene Peterson translates a passage from James 3 this way:

A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it!

Whether you are a company leader, a parent, a mentor, or someone that others look up to, your words hold immense power.

What Encouragement is and Isn't

Most leaders think that encouragement is saying things like:

"Great job!"

"Well done!"

"Way to go!"

But that is not encouragement at all. It's a reward. It's what one expects after a job well done. It's the bare minimum.

Encouragement, on the other hand, is telling others that you believe in them before they even start.

Offering rewards by saying "great job," is important, but it is not encouragement.

So how do you encourage others and inspire them to achieve more than than might think is possible? These six ways are a great start.

6 Ways to Encourage Others

1. Show them you care

When you take the time to learn about others, especially when you are in a position of authority, it shows that you care. And it empowers and encourages them. If you are a business leader, the best way to do this is in your one-on-one meetings. If you aren't doing one-on-ones with your team, this one-on-one meeting guide is a great start.

Take the time to learn about their family, interests, fears, challenges, and dreams. One of the single best ways to encourage others is to care about what they care about.

2. Tell them verbally

Use the four magic leadership words: I believe in you.

Take the time to tell your team, your friends, your family, and your followers that you believe in their abilities and that you are confident that they will succeed.

3. Tell them in writing

The great thing about encouraging in writing is that it lasts a lot longer. I cannot count the number of times I went to a team member's cubical and saw notes that I'd written to them years before.

Our daughter's mirror is surrounded by notes Tara and I have written to her. She will be able to read those for a lifetime.

4. Share with others

One of the best ways to encourage someone is to tell others how great she is. When you speak of your spouse in public, praise him. When you talk about your children, praise them.

At work, when you talk about a team member with a fellow manager, talk him up. Over time, it will create a culture of encouragement.

5. Trust them with more

When you assign responsibility to someone, even if you verbalize it, you are saying, "I trust you." Trust conveys belief.

When you give someone responsibility, remember you are not only trusting them with the expectation of success, but you are allowing them to make mistakes. When you micromanage or try

to "fix" things along the way, it is discouraging and demotivating. Give responsibility, trust, and get out of the way.

6. Help them

This might sound like the opposite of #5, but let me be clear that helping is not micromanaging or meddling. Simply ask how you can help them. It's important for others to know that while you trust them, you are also there to help.

This goes beyond just helping with projects or tasks. Get involved in their personal development by offering to send them to professional training, seminars, classes, or other learning opportunities. Show them that you care about their self-improvement, not just them getting their work done.

Encourage Everyone

The great thing about each of these is that they are effective in any environment. They work in the office, at home, in your peer groups, and everywhere.

Just like when I say, "I'm proud of you" to our daughter, when you show that you care, tell others that you believe in them, talk positively about them to others, trust them with important things, and help them succeed, you encourage them to believe in themselves and accomplish more than they thought possible.

Make a commitment today to practicing just one of these six ways with your team, your colleagues, your family, and others and you'll be well on your way to being a positive influence. You'll encourage others and build a tribe of inspired followers.

What are you doing to encourage others? What are some other ways you can offer encouragement?