

Save Yourself an Unnecessary Trip: Trust Your Internal Wizard

By: Pat Lynch, Ph.D., President

Do you trust yourself? Do you have full faith that your talents and skills are enough to enable your success, or are you on a never-ending quest to find that elusive “missing piece” that, once found, you believe will enable you to become the successful person of your dreams?

When I think of self-trust, the movie *The Wizard of Oz* comes to mind. At the end of their long and perilous journey, the main characters learned that the missing piece each one of them wanted more than anything else in the world existed within themselves; they had just failed to recognize that fact. As the Wizard insightfully pointed out, Scarecrow had a brain all along; he just assumed his ideas were worthless because he believed his brain was missing. Tin Man’s heart was beating strongly; he just hadn’t recognized it despite his demonstrated compassion for others. The Cowardly Lion’s courage, in fact, was available upon request, though because he was unaware of its existence, he played the role of the coward he believed he must be. And Dorothy always had the ability to go home; she just lacked the understanding of the power of her ruby slippers. She didn’t recognize the wisdom and resourcefulness that resided within.

I see three lessons in this movie that apply to many people:

1. None of the characters was aware that what they were seeking, and had endured many dangers to find, was within.

2. All acted in ways consistent with their mistaken beliefs.

3. Each one needed permission from the Wizard to recognize their existing talents.

My experience in executive coaching is that people often are unaware of their talents or they do not trust their own awareness. Further, they behave as though they don’t have these talents. Often they feel they need permission to use them. They need help in recognizing and using their talents so they can step more fully into their greatness and become even more successful in business and in life.

The self-awareness part is crucial, and in fact, that’s all some people need to make dramatic leaps forward personally and professionally. In the movie *Pretty Woman*, Richard Gere plays an extraordinarily successful businessman whose personal life is empty. He is so driven by business-related ambition that he has never acknowledged his emotional needs. In one scene, he is bewildered because the woman playing his love interest (Julia Roberts) has responded to his business-like and one-sided plan for their future by turning him down to await her Prince Charming. Uncharacteristically he goes to a park instead of to the office to think things over. As he sits in the grass in his business suit, reflecting on what went wrong with the relationship, he removes his shoes and socks, rolls up his pant legs, and takes a few tentative steps barefoot through

the grass. His facial expression indicates that this is a new and pleasant experience for him, and as he takes a few more steps, we realize we are witnessing his discovery of his “inner child,” the emotional, playful part of himself that he had long suppressed and denied. This self-awareness enables him to transform himself from a driven, obsessively ambitious, win-at-any-cost, one-dimensional executive to a feeling, vulnerable human being who awakens to the beauty in the world and people around him. In fact, he finds his inner Prince Charming and wins the heart of Julia’s character.

Although few people are as driven and one-dimensional as Richard Gere’s character was portrayed before his awakening, we do tend to deny, suppress, or simply not recognize our inner talents and the skills we acquire through life. This lack of awareness prevents us from being as personally and professionally successful as we are capable of being. Here are eight steps you can take to recognize and use the greatness that lies within by acting as your own self-awareness Wizard:

1. Believe in yourself and your talents – i.e., those innate, non-transferable predispositions that make you who you are. For example, while there are many very good professional athletes, we recognize there is only one Michael Jordan and only one Tiger Woods. It is their talent that makes them superstars in their respective sports.
2. If you do not or cannot believe in yourself, find someone who does – i.e., a friend, colleague, family member, coach, or mentor. Learning from that person what he/she sees in you will help you discover your talents.
3. Give yourself permission to succeed.
4. If you need help in giving yourself that permission, find

someone who will teach you how to do it. (Note: While having someone else give you permission is a good start, you must learn to rely on yourself for permission to succeed in life.)

5. Cultivate your talents. Although they cannot be taught, they can be enhanced or improved through experience and acquiring new skills. For example, both Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods constantly practiced and learned new skills to supplement their talents and improve their games.
6. Make full use your current skills. Skills are things you can learn, and they improve with practice. They are transferable and come from outside, not from within.
7. Learn new skills to supplement your existing talent when appropriate.
8. Celebrate yourself and your success!

I believe that we find the things for which we search. Thus when we search internally for the talents that enable our success, we will find them. However, when we don’t trust our inner wisdom, like Dorothy and her pals, we are likely to go off on unnecessary journeys to seek what, ultimately, lies within. I encourage you to trust yourself. Recognize and develop your strengths. It’s your choice: will your life’s journey be about recognizing and leveraging your talents and skills, or about searching futilely outside yourself for the “missing” piece that, in fact, lies within? ➔

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