

EVERY PERSON A GENIUS

A few years ago we rode a train from Paris to Tours, France, where with good friends, we embarked upon a bus tour of several memorable chateaus in the Loire Valley. To our surprise, we visited the last home of Leonardo da Vinci. His chateau was and is 500 yards from the castle of his benefactor King Francis I of France. Frankly, we were awe struck by the experience of walking through his home, seeing his private chapel, imagining his presence there.

Leonardo da Vinci is now viewed as the archetype of the Renaissance man or woman. A Renaissance person is someone with encyclopedic knowledge and wisdom. Someone who integrates information across a wide spectrum of disciplines. Someone who seamlessly synthesizes the left brain of science with the right brain of the arts and creativity. Someone we now term a “genius.”

In Our Time

As many of you know, Walter Isaacson, noted history professor, former CEO of the Aspen institute, chairman of CNN and editor of Time Magazine has written several biographies of men viewed as geniuses. Most notable are Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Leonardo da Vinci and Steve Jobs. Walter Isaacson, in his own way, could be added to this list because of his demonstrated ability to excel in both the world of business and in creative literature.

What are the ingredients of genius? What is genius? Why should we care about it? Can each person be a genius in his or her own inimitable way? Does our world, Mother Earth, need genius now more than ever?

Aspects of Genius

The dictionary definition of genius is extraordinary intellectual power manifested in creative activity. This traditional definition is a bit restrictive in that many of us may not have extraordinary intellectual power but each of us does possess some talent that gives us enjoyment and enrichment. We each have our own unique “genius.” The list is endless but may include writing original software, painting, problem solving, facilitating or planning.

We also have the ability to activate our latent genius. The following list encompasses the characteristics possessed by such luminaries as our founding fathers, Stephen Hawking, Einstein, Franklin and Da Vinci.

Curiosity: Albert Einstein said, “I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious.” Different cultures inculcate different values by what is said to children when they depart. For example, Be Wise, Be Good, Be Careful, Be Curious or Be Open.

Quiet Time: Without leisurely time to reflect there is no possibility for creative genius to emerge. Our traditional geniuses either had time or took time to reflect, to think. This, as you know, is sorely lacking in our frenetic, modern world.

Deep Relaxation: Entering into a meditative or hypnotic state allows the information stored in the left hemisphere of our brain to traverse our Corpus Callosum and then merge with the creativity stored in the right hemisphere of our brain. How many of us take the time to do this? Read Tapping in by Laura Parnell.

Intense Observation: Leonardo studied people. He intensely observed the tongue of a woodpecker. He created the Mona Lisa smile. He dissected cadavers to understand the human body. How easy for us today! We Google information! But to think new thoughts we must activate our Corpus Callosum to connect the two hemispheres of our brain. Einstein's Corpus Callosum was three times normal size because he exercised it repeatedly.

Variable Intelligence: We all have different gifts, IQ levels, and EQ (emotional quotient) skills. Genius is present when we trust ourselves and joyfully celebrate ourselves in our uniqueness. Pure intelligence without creativity is barren. There are other variables too numerous to address herein but include passion, energy, playfulness, enough sleep, having a benefactor or financial freedom, ambition, imagination, and thinking "outside the box."

The Need for Genius Now

Our fragile planet has pressing challenges. World population is exploding. Environmental sustainability is severely threatened. Species extinction is growing. Political sanity is elusive. Water shortages are spreading. We face the daunting challenge of securing economic well being for each person while achieving environmental sustainability. On the plus side, globalism is reducing extreme poverty. Read Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet by Jeffrey D. Sachs.

Each of us is called to energize our latent genius, to spark up our curiosity. Stephen Hawking was exemplary in saying, "I always wanted to know how everything worked." Sir Winston Churchill reminds us that, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Take a moment to Google the Ray Stevens Lyrics from his 1970's song "Everything is Beautiful." Remember Deepak Chopra's wisdom that "The healthiest response to life is joy" and "The most creative act you will ever undertake is the act of creating yourself."

Lastly, Einstein said, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

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