

# THE INSPIRED LIFE



*How Connection and Contribution  
Create Power, Passion, and Joy*

Randy Siegel

PRAISE FOR

## The Inspired Life: How Connection and Contribution Create Power, Passion, and Joy

“Siegel has the rare talent of drawing upon head and heart to move us forward. I found his beautifully crafted book *The Inspired Life: How Connection and Contribution Create Power, Passion, and Joy* a true inspiration. The book comes alive through stories, practical exercises (that work!), and personal truths.”

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**The Inspired Life:  
How Connection and Contribution Create Power, Passion, and Joy**

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to Andrew Glasgow. When I first saw the movie *The Matrix*, the concept of parallel universes intrigued me. Could it be possible that while we are living our lives here, others are living theirs in a time and space different from our own?

Andrew is sick. Actually, he is dying. His illness is showing me that the concept of parallel universes is not as far-fetched as I had once thought. All of Andrew's family and friends (and there are many) have experienced his disease differently, in our own parallel universes. For me, Andrew's illness has become a poignant reminder of the importance of focusing on what's really important in life.

Andrew, this book is dedicated to you. You are my friend, you are my brother, and you are my muse.

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## From Transition to Transformation

It was a lazy Saturday afternoon when my work line rang. “You know I wouldn’t call on Saturday unless it was an emergency,” a business acquaintance began. “But my godson is in crisis. He needs your help.”

His godson was a well-known physician with a thriving practice in a historic Southern town. He appeared to have it all: money, prestige, and power. A beautiful wife and children. A home that could have leaped off the pages of *Southern Accents* magazine. Yet he was miserable and doubting every aspect of his life. His work seemed devoid of meaning, and life felt devoid of joy.

“You’ve come to the right place,” I replied. Working with people in transition is a specialty of mine. Clients come to me when they’ve reached a point in their lives where they:

- Desire more meaning in their work and life.
- Feel a sense of urgency to live life more fully.
- Need to find more balance in their life.
- Yearn for deeper, more intimate connections with others.
- Disconnect from a career and lifestyle that may have provided happiness for many years.
- Seek a life that better reflects their core values, interests, skills, experience, and strengths.

Does this sound familiar? If so, you’re in the right place. I’ve written this book for you.

## A Premise and a Promise

Of all the questions you will answer in life, none is more important than these two: “How can you become your best self?” and “How can you live your best life?” Your very happiness and the secret for living a full life lie in the answers. This book will provide those answers; live those answers and you’ll transform your life.

Who you become, and the life you live, are shaped by what you focus on, and what you focus on is determined by the things that hold the most value to you. By focusing on two values—connecting and contributing—you will stand in your power; you will be your best self and live your best life.

## Helping People Stand in Their Power

I have been helping people stand in their power by becoming the full expression of all they are since 1999 when I became a life trainer, coach, and writer—focusing especially on leadership and communications.

Standing in your power is allowing yourself to be yourself. It entails peeling back layers of tribal conditioning to discover your authentic self. When you stand in your power, you are your best self and you live your best life. You:

- Display confidence, competence, and conviction.
- Live life with power, passion, and purpose.
- Forge stronger and deeper relationships with yourself, others, and your higher power or purpose.
- Love yourself, your work, and your life.

Much of my earlier work was based on my workshop and book *Engineer Your Career*. In them, I offer participants and readers a series

of exercises so that they can create their Best Self Blueprint, a summary designed to help them package, present, and promote themselves with authenticity, vision, conviction, competency, clarity, and caring—hallmarks of all great communicators and leaders.

While packaging, presenting, and promoting yourself is paramount to becoming a stronger communicator and leader, it alone will not ensure that you become your best self and live your best life. Like a pair of bookends, *Engineer Your Career* and *The Inspired Life* offer readers practical advice on how to navigate the ages and stages of adulthood from age twenty to sixty-five and beyond, whether your focus is on your career, your personal life, or both.

## What We'll Cover

The best answers in life are often the simplest. As humans we tend to overthink and overcomplicate most things. As you learned earlier, when you closely examine what matters most in life, two words, both beginning with the letter “c,” emerge. They are connection and contribution, and when you focus on connection and contribution you become your best self and live your best life.

In Part I, you'll learn about the two “Cs,” and in Part II, you'll learn that connection is threefold: connection to self, connection to others, and connection to your higher power or purpose.

You'll discover that connecting to self is a lifelong journey and that getting in touch with signs and symbols, the shadow, core values, needs and feelings, and your “witness observer” can help you identify and claim your authentic self.

Introvert or extrovert, we are all happier when we are in community and internalize the eternal truth: “We are all one.” You'll learn several strategies for removing the barriers that connect us to one another.

Whether we call it God, an ideal, or something else, all of us want to believe in something bigger than ourselves. You'll learn that connecting to your higher power or purpose is crucial if you are going to live a life of meaning. In the final chapter of Part II, you'll identify your personal theology. We'll also discuss how you can strengthen your connection to your higher power and then put that connection to work to make the world a better place.

All of us want to live a life that matters. In Part III, we'll focus on the second "c," contribution. You'll learn four paths to and five components of purpose. Additionally, we'll discuss a strategy for succeeding in "The New Economy."

Finally in Part IV, you'll learn four principles that will supercharge your power to connect and contribute. They are: becoming present, intentional, authentic, and grateful.

Throughout the book, I offer a smorgasbord of suggestions on how to align your life with the principles of connection and contribution. At the end of each chapter, you'll inventory any "ahas" you might have, and in the final section, Part V, you'll create a brief action plan to put these principles to work in your life so that you can begin living the life you were meant to live.

## How to Use This Book

I may not know you personally, but I suspect you are much like me: you feel there's more to life than you're experiencing; you sense there's more to you than you express. I am not a guru; I am a seeker just like you. I don't have all the answers, but I have spent a lot of time studying the questions, and along the way I've discovered some strategies that will help you grow into your best self and live your best life.

The journey to bring connection and contribution into your life

is a personal one. In this book, I will share aspects of my own and others' journeys. Take what resonates with you and discard the rest.

How much you benefit from this book is up to you. The process can be an active or passive one. By simply reading the book, you'll pick up its principles and perhaps several key points will find their mark. A second option is to fully engage in the process by stopping and answering each question as it arises. Each question and exercise has been designed to integrate these principles into your life.

Commit the answers to paper. I've found that when clients take the time to write out the answers, rather than answering them in their heads, they are more likely to find clarity and achieve greater results.

Whichever approach you take, know that I am with you in spirit. You're embarking on an exciting journey, and I am honored to accompany you.

I  
PART I



EPIPHANY

Nothing gets my juices flowing faster than a good “aha”! Every now and then, life delivers an “aha” that transforms your life. I call these “epiphanies.” Epiphanies are those flashes of insight when the last piece of the puzzle falls neatly into place allowing you to see the entire picture.

In the next chapter, I’ll share the story of a sick friend whose life became an epiphany for me. His name is Andrew, and through his life you’ll discover how to be your best self and live your best life.

You’ll also learn about the uninvited guest and the special gift he has just for you.



# Two “Cs” That Can Change Your Life

I WAS OVER FORTY when I started seriously thinking about death. I always thought I’d die young. My dad died in his fifties, and my mother and brother died in their sixties. I come from a family of short-livers.

One of my best friends, Roy, and I were talking about death one day and he said, “When someone we know dies the world should stop, if only for a moment. Instead, we go on with our daily routines as if the person never existed.” Roy’s observation frightened me. I can’t think of anything sadder than living life and not leaving a legacy.

## **Andrew’s Legacy**

Swiss-born psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, one of the world’s foremost experts on death and dying, concluded after interviewing thousands of dying people that legacies aren’t built on trophies, dollars, or accolades received, but on the good one has done, the

relationships one has cultivated, and the love one has shared.

One of my dearest friends has cancer, and the prognosis isn't a positive one. I asked Andrew one day if he'd be ready when his time came.

Andrew didn't hesitate; he answered yes. He explained that he'd had a full life despite his young age. He was proud of what he'd accomplished, and most importantly he was proud of the wonderful, rich friendships he'd made along the way.

If you saw the numerous photos and awards in Andrew's office, you'd know that Andrew enjoyed a rich and rewarding career in the arts, but that's not what he's most proud of. Andrew lights up when he talks about his friends. Andrew has curated a loyal, interesting, and eclectic collection of friends throughout the world.

They love Andrew, and Andrew loves them. When Andrew first got sick he was living in New York. His friends volunteered to travel to Manhattan and take care of him weekly, for more than six months.

Andrew loves sharing his friends. He is always connecting one person to another. Attend one of Andrew's many parties and you're guaranteed to make a new friend or business acquaintance. Andrew will tell you: making connections is his life's purpose.

Andrew is living the inspired life by focusing on what matters most—connection and contribution.

## **Which Wolf Will You Feed?**

Who you become and the life you live are shaped by what you focus on, and what you focus on is determined by the things that hold the most value to you. Change your values, and you'll change your life. There's a wonderful Native American story that illustrates this point.

*An elderly grandfather is teaching his grandchildren about life. He explains that there's a terrible fight going on inside of each of us, and it's between two wolves.*

*One wolf represents one set of values; the second wolf, another set of values.*

*"Which wolf will win?" asks one precocious child.*

*The old Cherokee is silent a moment, before replying: "The one you feed."*

Values are like stars. The ones you choose as guides will lead you to your destiny. The stars we choose often depend on what stage of life we are in. During the first half of life, we may focus on establishing our place in the world. We:

- Build our careers
- Find a life partner and have children
- Seek to fulfill our parents' and society's expectations for our lives

Then we reach a point where we find ourselves asking the question in that old Peggy Lee song: "Is that all there is?" It's then that we swap stars, trading a biological and social agenda for one more concerned with psychological and spiritual issues. We shift our focus from the outer to the inner world.

Recent research doesn't associate this transition with any particular age. Anecdotal research concurs. In my practice, I'm seeing more and more men and women in their twenties and thirties experiencing this shift in values.

Whether age twenty-six or fifty-four, something usually happens to trigger an awakening, and in most cases these events are unin-

vited. For this reason, I call them “uninvited guests.” In one of my favorite movies, *American Beauty*, an uninvited guest, a job loss, spurs Kevin Spacey’s character Lester Burnham to reexamine his life.

Lester says, “I feel like I’ve been in a coma for the past twenty years. And I’m just now waking up.”

## Uninvited Guests

When the uninvited guest arrives at our door, he carries with him a special gift just for us. When we don’t come to the door the first time, it’s no problem, the uninvited guest returns. He returns again and again, and each time we refuse to answer his call he gets more aggressive, until finally he’s had enough. He drives his car right through our living room. I remember the day he drove through mine.

It was a Saturday. My wife stared at me blankly, her face void of emotion, my words too horrific to absorb. I had just told her I was gay and was leaving. With seven words, fourteen years of marriage and thirty-nine years of lying to myself ended.

I was no longer a mainstream married man. Instead, I was a queer, a fag, a homo. I feared I would lose my family, friends, and future. I feared for my wife.

In many ways our marriage was a good one. We enjoyed each other’s company, shared similar interests, and forged a partnership most businesses would envy. Most thought we had the perfect marriage.

Our marriage was far from perfect, however. While we were sexual on occasion, we were never intimate. One cannot speak from the soul wearing a mask.

At age thirty-eight, cracks began to form on the walls protecting my life. I blamed work for my unhappiness, thinking my job was no longer fulfilling.

I secured the names of two counselors, an industrial psychologist and a psychiatrist. I went to both. The psychiatrist was more perceptive, suggesting I was searching for something more than a new career. Before I knew it, I had told him I was gay. By admitting it to someone else, I admitted it to myself. The first step of coming out was coming out to myself.

He assured me my wife and I would survive. With the right support I could come out, and we would be fine.

I went to him a few more times, but the chemistry didn't feel right. A friend recommended another therapist. "But she's tough," my friend warned.

As I shared my story with the new therapist, I emphasized I had been faithful. I wanted her to know I was a good person. Integrity was important to me.

"Don't you see? You're living a lie," she responded.

Her words were a boil on my soul waiting to be lanced. I was tired of lies.

Within several weeks, I was ready to face the storm. No sooner had my wife and I returned from a Memorial Day trip than I blurted it out. I came out to my wife. Stripped of all pretenses, we felt naked and exposed. Raw and vulnerable, we shared intimacy for the first time.

Within a month, we were separated, and I was alone. As ugly as this time was, I now can see its beauty. I now know love overpowers fear. Truth triumphs over guilt.

I had been focusing on my parents' values; I was living *their* lives. I had a successful career, a beautiful wife who loved me, and all the material things that come from success, yet I was miserable. None of these things fulfilled me for they didn't reflect my most authentic self.

My story is about coming out, but uninvited guests take many disguises. Illness, divorce, death, estrangement, a job loss, extreme restlessness, or something more positive like a promotion, birth, or miraculous healing can initiate this shift.

My friend Bill Petz knows this all too well; he has Parkinson's disease. Recently, he wrote a beautiful piece for his church that he appropriately titled "Uninvited Guest."

He wrote:

*I've chosen to see my Parkinson's disease as just that, an invited guest in my body and in my life. Given that perspective, I feel that I am bound by the ancient code of hospitality that dictates that I must welcome the stranger, be a good host, and provide for the guest. The guest, in turn, is bound not to abuse the welcome offered by the host. Such welcoming creates understanding, mutual benefit, and compassion.*

Bill believes that we are called to become the person we were born to be, and that means accepting whatever comes along in life. The good and the bad. Bill says Parkinson's disease has taught him a lot. He is grateful for each day, and he has never been more focused on what really matters in life.

Look around and you'll see uninvited guests ringing lots of doorbells. Perhaps one is at your door. "The Great Values Shift" is taking place, and it's calling us to pay attention and stay alert.

## **The Great Values Shift**

You may be feeling unsettled, but you may not be sure why. You aren't alone. We are all sensing that a change is taking place, and change makes us uneasy. This unsettled feeling is mostly unconscious; few of us are able to articulate it. Yet it is very real.

It's been called many names, including "post-materialism," "the fourth great awakening," and "the Age of Aquarius." I call it "The Great Values Shift." During The Great Values Shift the world is calling us to define our priorities and shift our values from materialism to meaning.

We are beginning to question a lot of things, including our definition of success and how to become successful. And many of us are concluding that success doesn't equal happiness; happiness equals success.

Most of us define success by "externals," such as money, power, and prestige, but that definition doesn't bring the peace and happiness we so desperately seek. In the U.S. alone more than 10 percent of the population (over 30 million people), rich by world standards, are on antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs. And more than 56 million Americans are using sleep-aid drugs, according to an article by Denise Gellene in the *Los Angeles Times*.

We can define success another way—by "internals," or simply loving what we do. Albert Schweitzer once wrote, "If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

During The Great Values Shift more and more people will shift to an internal way of measuring success. It's already happening. Some call this shift the "love to work movement."

A wise advisor recently suggested, "We should totally erase the word 'success' from our vocabulary and replace it with the word 'fulfillment.' Fulfillment is really what we're after, because fulfillment brings happiness." Makes perfect sense to me. I know a lot of people who are "successful" but not happy, but everyone I know who is fulfilled is living a happy life.

Values shifts have occurred throughout history. When these shifts occur, a social issue often gives birth to a movement. For

example, we've seen women's rights and environmental awareness give birth to movements that impact how we see ourselves and how we live our lives.

Don't look to the mainstream press for information; you won't find much—yet. But know that the issue is bubbling and boiling under the surface; it's just a matter of time before it flows—rather than seeps—into our everyday consciousness.

## Why Now?

While many factors contribute to this shift, two seem particularly relevant. First, the economy has forced many people to reevaluate their priorities. Job loss—or in the case of young people, the inability to find jobs—declining investments, and devastating debt are challenging many of us to reexamine our definition of success.

Second, each generation—for different reasons—is questioning the work ethic in this country. The country's eighty-five million baby boomers are aging. In the second half of their lives, they are becoming hyperaware of their mortality and are becoming more introspective. Many are seeking increased meaning in their work and lives.

The forty-four to fifty million Americans born between 1965 and 1980, who make up Generation X, generally disdain authority and structured work hours, and are seeking work-life balance. This generation works to live rather than lives to work.

Finally, the seventy-six million members of Generation Y feel that the line between work and home is nonexistent. These twenty-somethings want to spend their time in meaningful and useful ways, no matter where they are. For example, more than half of workers in their twenties prefer employment at companies that provide volunteer opportunities, according to a Deloitte survey.

Generation Y is right: the boundaries between work and home are breaking down. Technology has connected us to the office 24/7, and the economy is demanding more from us. We are tired, and many of us are beginning to question the values we once based our lives upon.

## What Some Folks Are Saying About the Shift

“I believe a values shift is taking place,” a friend recently shared, “but it’s happening one person at a time.”

“Oh, I think it’s impacting everyone,” another friend argued. “It’s just that some people are more conscious of it than others.”

Another friend piped in, “I think this shift is more of a wish than a truth.” He had a good point.

Whether you see “The Great Values Shift” as a truth or a wish really doesn’t matter. Either way, it’s an opportunity. By shifting our values from materialism to meaning and redefining our beliefs about success, we will find more power, passion, and purpose in our lives.

Talk to those around you and you’ll find that many are waking up to the realization that at the end of our days, it won’t be the number of cars we have in the carport that defines our lives, but the people we have loved, and who have loved us. We’ll feel good about our lives because we know we’ve been of service, and we’ll feel proud of how we’ve lived.

# II

PART II



## THE FIRST C: CONNECTION

As you learned earlier, connection and contribution are crucial if you're going to become your best self and live your best life. In Part II, we'll explore connection; specifically, we'll take a closer look at:

- Connection to Self
- Connection to Others
- Connection to Your Higher Power

## Connect to Self

Jim Henry, author of *The Privilege of a Lifetime*, says there are three dimensions of living in our truth: awareness, acceptance, and action. Put another way, there are three ways to connect with self:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Self-Acceptance
3. Authentic Action

Of all the journeys in life few are more important than the journey to discover, accept, share, and act upon our authentic selves. How we connect to self determines in large part how we connect with others and even to our higher power and purpose. In the next three chapters, we'll learn to connect to self through self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic action.

## Connect to Others

“Ubuntu” is an idea present in African spirituality that says, “I am because we are.”

In Chapter 5 we'll review connecting to others. You'll learn about fears that keep us from connecting, connection breakers, and

tools for forging stronger connections to others. Finally, we'll explore an eternal truth: We are all one.

## **Connect to Your Higher Power**

The final chapter of this section concerns connecting to your higher power or purpose. Deep down, most of us want to believe in something larger than ourselves, whether it's religion, values, philosophy, or a practice, such as a twelve-step program. In this chapter, I'll discuss the concept of spiritual intelligence and three steps to develop yours: 1) define your spiritual outlook; 2) fuel your faith; and 3) practice your faith.