



THE
INSPIRING
LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK

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Concept 1:

Embrace the Three Universal Dimensions of Leadership



Inspiring and infuriating leaders exist on an enduring continuum that is made up of three universal factors. The exact same characteristics emerge in every culture and country across the globe. These three factors of inspiring others are universal because each one fulfills a fundamental human need: Being Visionary fulfills the fundamental human need for meaning and purpose. Being an Exemplar satisfies the need for protection and passion. And being a Mentor gives us the feeling of belonging and status that we all crave.

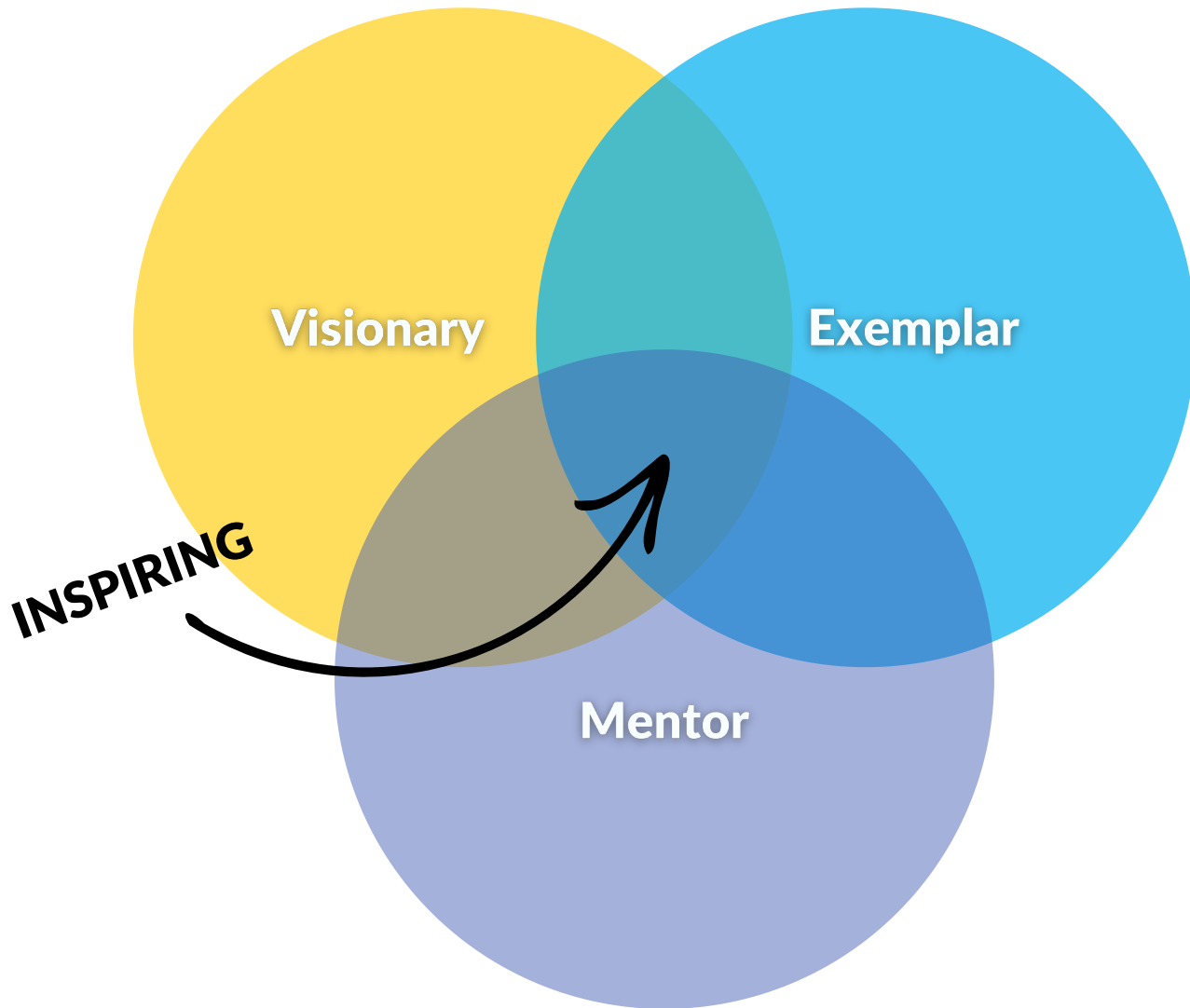
Inspiring leaders excel in three key areas:

- **Visionary:** Visualize and clearly communicate an optimistic big picture that is grounded in core values.
- **Exemplar:** Lead by example with authentic passion, calm courage, and integrity.
- **Mentor:** Empower, elevate, and empathize with others to help them reach their full potential.



Action Step: Reflect on where you currently stand on these three universal dimensions. Which one is your greatest strength? On which dimension(s) could you be more inspiring (and less infuriating)?

VEM Diagram



Concept 2:

Leverage the Leader Amplification Effect



Because leaders have a big impact on others, they will either inspire or infuriate.. I call this the Leadership Amplification Effect. When we are in a position of leadership, all eyes are on us and, as a result, all of our words and expressions—positive and negative, verbal and non-verbal—get amplified. Constructive comments feel like *humiliating criticism* when they come from a leader. The phrase “I need to talk to you” sends shivers down our spines when it comes from our boss. And when leaders don’t respond to our queries, their silence can feel deafening. But it’s not all bad news. When a leader compliments or shares credit with others, it often becomes *glorious praise*.

Every word and action from a leader gets amplified. This means that you don’t have a choice of whether you will have an impact. But you do have a choice of whether that impact will be inspiring or infuriating.

- **Leverage Positive Amplifications:** Be generous with praise and appreciation. Provide clear guidance.
- **Avoid Negative Amplifications:** Regulate your emotions and your critical tongue. Avoid ambiguity or silence when communication is needed.



Action Step: Ask yourself, “What impact will my words and actions have today?”

Concept 3:

Leaders Are Made, Not Born



We are NOT born as inspiring or infuriating individuals. Rather, it is our current behavior that either inspires or infuriates. Because there is a universal and systematic set of inspiring attributes, those skills can be taught, they can be nurtured, and they can be developed. Although there is a universal toolkit for being inspiring, the process isn't easy; life often slants us towards the infuriating end of the continuum. But the continuum also offers hope. When we find ourselves drifting towards the infuriating end, we have a clear path back to the other side.

Inspiring leadership is not an innate gift –it is a set of skills that anyone can learn, develop, and practice.

- **How to Be More Visionary:** Reflect on your values and why they matter to you. Simplify your message and repeat it often to make it stick.
- **How to Be a More Inspiring Exemplar:** Recall a time when you were powerful and in control. Engage in a calming practice like meditation.
- **How to Be a More Elevating Mentor:** Take the perspective of others to understand where they are coming from. Let go of micromanaging and trust others with new responsibilities.



Action Step: Write down one behavior to practice this week: e.g., simplify my vision, stay calm under pressure, elevate someone by highlighting their contributions.

Concept 4:

Think Like an Architect



Inspiring leaders think like architects, intentionally designing systems, policies, and processes to shape behaviors and outcomes. Just as architects create spaces to evoke specific reactions and interactions, leaders can structure environments that encourage collaboration, innovation, and fairness. Small decisions—like where to sit and when to speak during a meeting—can empower others and reduce the Leader Silencing Effect. Thoughtful frameworks, like clear agendas or pre-set voting rules, help resolve conflicts and keep teams focused. By designing structures that guide actions, leaders ensure their influence endures, even in their absence, to foster productivity, satisfaction, and positive relationships.

Design systems and environments that inspire others, even when you're not present.

- **Visionary Designs:** Establish clear protocols and expectations to guide behavior.
- **Exemplary Designs:** Empower your team by rotating who leads the weekly meeting.
- **Mentor Designs:** Create predefined processes for resolving disagreements.



Action Step: Choose one process—e.g., the format of a meeting or feedback session—and redesign it to be more collaborative and empowering.

Concept 5:

REIP What You Sow



How can you be more inspiring more of the time? My research points to four key actions reflected in the acronym **REIP**, which is a homonym for “reap” because if we pour inspiration into others, we receive inspiration right back. **R**eflect on your recent behavior to identify when you were inspiring or infuriating; **E**mulate the behaviors of leaders that inspire you. Turn your reflections and emulations into an **I**ntention: commit to a specific behavior over the next week to be more visionary, exemplary, or uplifting. **P**ractise that behavior daily to help it become second nature. By regularly reflecting, emulating, intending, and practicing, you can grow your inspiring capacity and have an enduring positive impact on those around you.

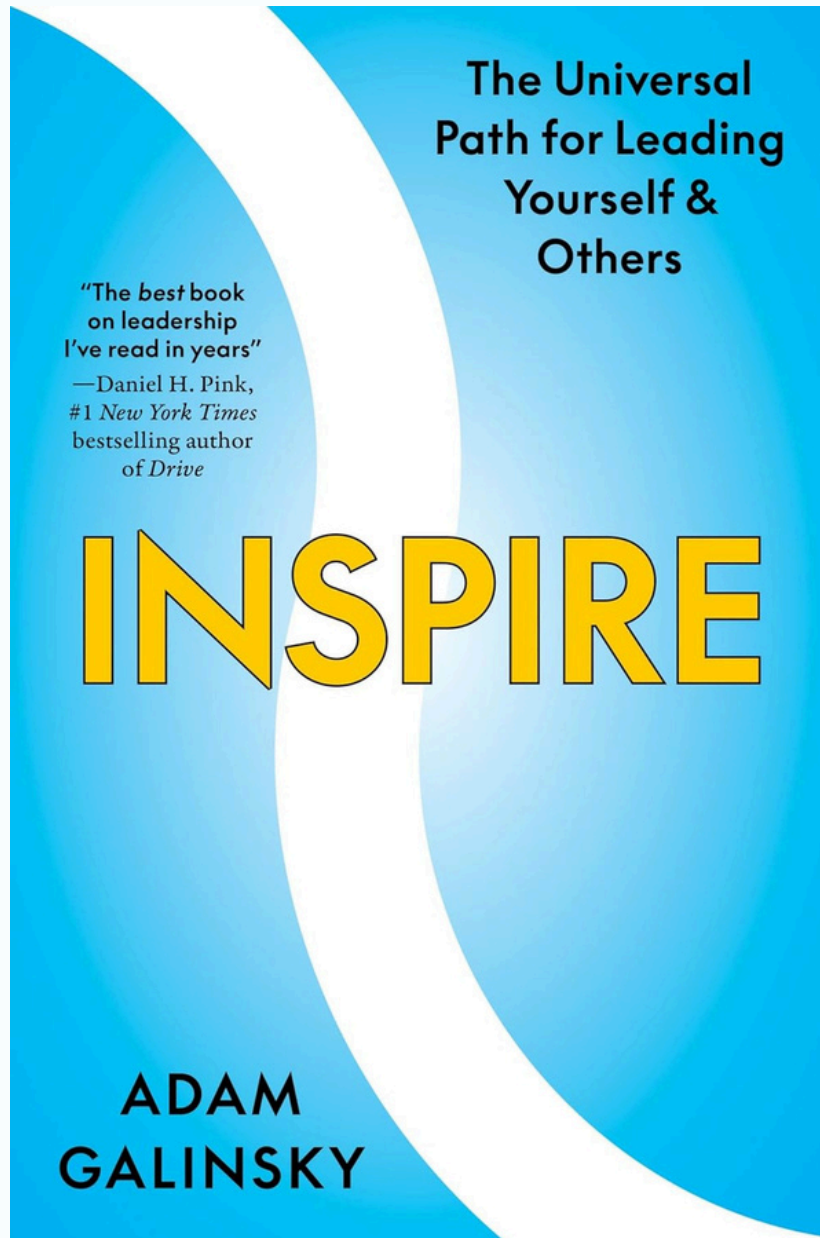
Regular reflection makes you a more intentional and inspiring leader.

- **Reflect:** Take time each month to assess when you were and were not inspiring and how you might improve.
- **Emulate:** Choose a leader you admire and think how you might adopt one of their inspiring behaviors.
- **Intend:** Pick one inspiring characteristic to improve this month and commit to implementing it.
- **Practice:** Make a daily effort to apply your chosen behavior in real-life situations.



Action Step: Set a monthly REIP reminder to identify and implement one behavior to practice to become more inspiring.

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