

Mentoring Matters

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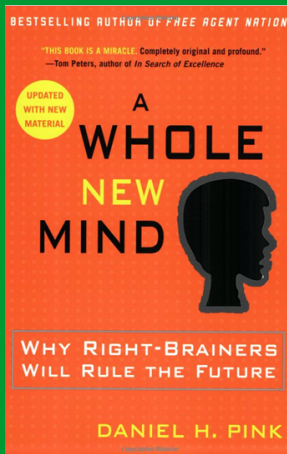
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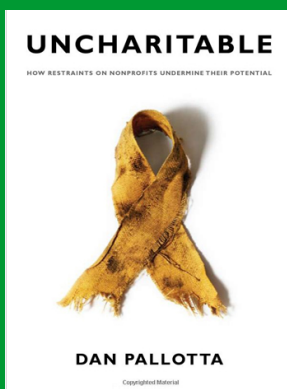
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Dana Campbell Saylor Recommends Reading:



A Whole New Mind: Why
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Interview with
Dana Campbell Saylor
Chief Executive Officer
[YWCA Maricopa County](#)

MM: Why are you so invested in mentoring?

DCS: Mentoring has shaped who I am academically and professionally. I was mentoring and being mentored long before I knew what it was called. I was very fortunate to have two generations of women, my grandmother and my

mother, were my first mentors; they were outstanding. Though it was extremely rare in the 1940's, both of them were professional women and served on boards. It was a family tradition and value to give back by helping others.

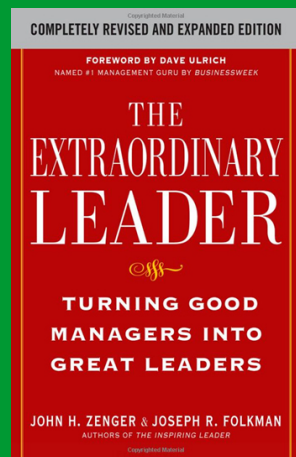
When a young woman I was mentoring told me that I was holding a place for her until she could step in to that place, it caused me to pause and think. I had never thought of what I do when I mentor in that way. I have taken it forward in several different ways and in several different contexts.

MM: How have you taken the concept of "holding a place for you" forward?

DCS: Because I am the CEO of a large women's organization, I live my passion and have the opportunity to focus on issues that are important to me and important to most women. I consider it my responsibility to keep critical conversation alive, create awareness and to continue to do so until younger women can step in and take it forward. I try to provide a platform where they can be heard and where they can connect, and I know that their lives are better for it. I believe that mentoring is vitally important for young women today. They have a lot going on: the information, technological speed in the world that they live in, and the responsibilities that they shoulder. We have to hold a place for them.

MM: Can you share a quick story about mentoring?

DCS: When I worked at the Governor's Office Division for Women, a young woman came in and was desperate for help. She was very lost: she and her toddler had moved to Arizona from Illinois the spring before. Divorced from her husband, she was making a new life for herself. Her daughter was to visit her father each summer for 3 weeks. When it came time for the child to be returned to her, the grandparents filed for custody, and to complicate matters the mother had just been laid off from her job. She was overwhelmed and saw no hope fighting through the courts in two states. This is why I don't



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believe one type or style of mentoring fits all. I helped her create a one year plan, provided her with guidance about the legal system, had her move into an apartment in a school district that offered Headstart programs, and helped her find a job close to home, within walking distance. I shepherded her through a court advocate, and at the end of the year she had her daughter back, enrolled in Head Start, and was in a much better place and very happy. My mentoring was full of human contact that made a tremendous difference in two young lives, and of course, it was very rewarding for me too.

MM: What do you like best about mentoring others?

DCS: What I like best about mentoring others is the feel of connectedness: that we have mutual trust as we navigate together. We have respect for each other, and as a mentor I hope to be a powerful instrument for positive change and serve as a role model. I believe sharing real-life experiences.

MM: What is the secret to your success?

DCS: Last May I was asked to give the commencement address at a local school, and I shared two things with them. One was my secret to success, which I call my "North Star Guidance system", or being able to trust my emotional guidance system that I have developed over my life. Daniel Pink writes in his best seller, [A Whole New Mind](#), that we are entering a whole new age. He called it the Conceptual Age, where traits that set people apart today are going to come from our hearts as well as our heads. It's no longer just the logical linear, rules-based thinking that matters, he says. It's also empathy and joyfulness and purpose, inner traits that have transcendent worth. I think mentoring is a good example of all that.

My second secret is Happiness. You have to live for something larger than yourself: be part of something or stand for something larger than yourself. Life is reciprocal. To feel good you have to go out and do good- help someone else move forward.

MM: From an organizational perspective how has mentoring contributed to how you have chosen to leave your legacy?

DCS: From an organizational perspective, mentoring has contributed to my strategic approach to have a support system as I envision it to be, as well as organizational objectives for when I transition. I have goals of where I would like this organization to be; hence my legacy. I want the woman that steps into my shoes to be able to take this organization to the next level and knock it out of the ball park.

Recently YWCA held a focus group for young professional women where we discussed mentoring. Our discussion empowered a young woman to evaluate the women in her organization, and approach one with the request that she mentor her. The young woman's optimism about her future with the company turned around and she saw a brighter future. The young woman said if we had not discussed the importance of mentoring, she would have never approached her new mentor. I consider that a more informal way of mentoring but just as important as any formal relationship.

MM: What advice would you give to other leaders interested in mentoring?

DCS: Do it! It is very rewarding!

MM: What books are you reading now that you would recommend to other leaders/mentors?

DCS: Actually I am rereading, [The Extraordinary Leader](#) by John H. Zenger & Joseph R. Folkman and [Uncharitable](#) by Dan Pallotta. And of

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