

The Daily Gleaner

Green Matters for the Daily Gleaner

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By Sonya Hull

It's Time to Reimagine

People mistakenly assume that their thinking is done by their head; it is actually done by the heart which first dictates the conclusion, then commands the head to provide the reasoning that will defend it. - Anthony de Mello, Jesuit Priest and spiritual leader

Each new year is only 12 months after the last one, but it seems enough time that one is always ready to receive some inspiration - some good reason to start something new or do something differently. In the past eight days for some blessed reason, I've received more inspiration than I know what to do with.

Some of it is because of a 'calling all moms' plea I put out on Facebook asking how I can parent better on a certain issue. Books were recommended so I started reading. Some of it I found on Twitter where a colleague put me onto www.ted.com, a non-profit organization and website that collects inspired ideas. TED believes passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world. So they're building a clearinghouse that offers free knowledge and inspiration from the world's most inspired thinkers, and also a community of curious souls to engage with ideas and each other.

One of the many TED speakers says before he prepared his talk that conference organizers told him to: "go out on a limb and say something surprising". And indeed, as you watch any of the hundreds of videotaped talks from as far back as 1984, you will hear more surprising and thought-provoking ideas than you can process. The notions range from environment to leadership, culture to poverty, love to money, inventions to compassion, and hundreds more. The small sample of videos I've watched are beautiful, funny, fascinating, ingenious, heartbreaking and inspiring. But the last word sticks. Inspiring. We may not stop to think about it very often, but ultimately don't we all want to live an 'inspired' life?

As Anthony de Mello's quote suggests, many of the TED speakers are leading with their hearts and then their thinking catches up, culminating with an idea that is worth spreading. And in fact, if enough people actually heard the idea and believed it too, it could take hold and turn into something extraordinary. Would it change the world? Maybe. But first it might change someone's life or change a community.

So instead of resolutions this year, I propose for your consideration that you find something to be inspired about. Maybe it is a new parenting approach to connect with your kids on a deeper level. Maybe it is a commitment to use less and waste less and find cool ways to make this happen. Maybe it is a desire to volunteer and make a difference in your community. Whatever it is go out on a limb and make it surprising.

As for me, there have been signs accumulating over several years that are speaking to me now stronger than ever before. And given the intent of this column you will have guessed

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that they are environmental in nature. To sum it up, many of us feel the world is veering in a direction that doesn't make us comfortable. Yet we surround ourselves in nothing but comfort to cushion the blow – well, comfort and busy-ness. I am still challenged to 'name' my inspiration, but it is from this fount that it originates. One of the TED speakers talks about how life must create conditions conducive to life. Our world at present is not creating conditions conducive to life and we must somehow turn this around.

These unsettling feelings are perhaps best described in Paul Hawken's book 'Blessed Unrest', where he writes so eloquently about humanity's collective genius, and the unstoppable movement to reimagine our relationship to the environment and one another. One reviewer describes Hawken as "revealing the twin heart of the environmental and social justice movements, he helps us know ourselves in a new way—as competent members of the natural world, intent on recovering from our stumble as a species."

So then maybe my inspiration, my commitment, is to stop stumbling. To make some real and sustained changes in my life that are more than buying biodegradable soaps and CFLs. Strip things down – use less and waste less. Which, of course, ultimately means to desire less. The human goal paired with the obvious environmental goal is that maybe if we pad ourselves with less 'things', we connect with those around us more. Intuitively we know there is a freedom in simplifying our lives. I'm inspired to find out.

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