

## Authority - no need for pips on the shoulders

[Part 2 of 3]

As we continue to explore the nature of authority, it would be helpful to note that authority is a life-long journey for people. I have already suggested that everyone has a natural and innate sense of authority, which unifies our more noble capacities: a sense of purpose, a compassionate intent, and a spirit of humility which flows from our deep essence.

In Part 1, I drew on some of my school army cadet experience with the 'major' (nicknamed so because he wielded his perceived power over others on and off the parade ground) and I (who had little confidence without the bestowed rank of corporal). In that vignette both of us demonstrated a lack of innate and natural authority and relied solely on the external trappings of authority. Similarly, our lieutenant from Part 1 was more able to access his innate authority - not only on the parade ground but in his life overall. He demonstrated an instinctive ability to be able to kindle in others a relationship of respect and responsibility, while having firm expectations of those who didn't reciprocate with good intent.

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### Influential Authority: working from the inside out

The lieutenant's authority was a positive influence on the relationships he had, on and off the parade ground. At school you see your peers and seniors step up to all forms of authority: team captains, prefects, school captains et al. The lieutenant was a prefect and other positions were offered him over the years. In my eyes he demonstrated a natural ability to support, inspire and affect positive change on peer and staff alike.

He was my athletics captain, creating a purposeful goal for all of us to strive for, and a sense that each member had something to contribute, especially the less able of us. Somehow, he knew each person's special point of contribution - that special little thing, action, task, or skill that each of us could bring to the team which contributed to its overall goals. Interesting isn't it, how events stay in your mind over the years? We were the gold team, and I remember in one race, one of our team members came last. The captain went over to the despondent boy and pointed out that he was only one of four runners in his race - which meant that he contributed one more point to our overall tally. And that if he hadn't ran we wouldn't have got the point.

That same afternoon, he took me aside and asked if I would take part in 'the mile'. He explained that if I came in first, second or third we had a great chance of winning the carnival. I didn't understand at the time that there were three or four other events going on. He could see that our team could come first or second in each of them but that we needed a placing in the mile. I took part in many cross-country events, so he knew I could run the distance and hence, he placed this opportunity before me. I took it, and to my delight came third. Unfortunately, the other events didn't turn out the way he had planned and we came third. However, this taught me something about making timely decisions and fostering a 'can do attitude' in individuals and a team.

### Inside-out authority: journey of consciousness

A calm and steady state of mind reflected the lieutenant's ability to live his authority on many occasions. Did he have talent? Yes, he had an abundance of intellect, skill and aptitude. Yet there was a humility that the 'major' could not find. Again, there was a natural confidence that was not distracted, divided or fractured by the fear, doubt or indecision that often overwhelmed me.

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He could:

- ✓ Demonstrate his conviction to and certainty of a worthwhile goal while influencing others.
- ✓ Create purposeful objectives for others to follow, take initiative and simultaneously, create a sense of worth in others .
- ✓ Foster a 'can do attitude', develop individual capabilities, reinforce performance and point to continuous areas of improvement.
- ✓ See and take opportunities while making timely decisions.

I cannot speak for the 'major' but for myself I found an ability to demonstrate these same outcomes as a corporal conducting a training session, or as a gymnastics coach to peers and adults alike. Interestingly, at that time I was unable to see the connection between state of mind and how I was in the world. Seeing authority from the inside-out requires self-awareness or consciousness. And conscious people are able to harness a natural and powerful authority. That authority is in all of us and will be explored in the 3rd and final part of this article on authority. ■ ■