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**Authentic Success**

**By Jane Miller**

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A More Effective Way

I own a stack of self improvement books ten feet tall. Achievement seminars I've attended number in the dozens. I had been trying to improve myself since the second grade when Mrs. H. burst my young bubble. Although I went on to fourteen more years as a star pupil, I never forgot the way she made me feel – not good enough. And through the years whenever a co-worker, boss, or customer questioned my motives or integrity, I felt those same feelings – of being not good enough. So what went wrong with my self improvement stint? I tried dutifully to follow the advice in all those books and workshops, showing me what to do and how to be. But, time after time, I failed.

I have come to learn that I did not fail...what I did do was try to copy the efforts of others and expect results for me. My perceived lack of success came from trying to change myself. And, I was forcing on myself the methods and skills that weren't me!

Discovering and embracing your own authenticity is the more effective way toward achieving fulfillment in life. Want to be a better boss, more valuable volunteer, finer parent, more creative employee? Be yourself. Know yourself. Uncover and use your inborn strengths and your natural talents. Your authenticity, then, will serve as the foundation for all you are and do. Lead, manage, parent, create, love...all from this base of authenticity. Then, and only then, those enhancement skills– time management or assertiveness skills for example– will work in balance!

Authenticity

Authenticity, I have found, comes from a combination of engaging your talents, loves, and gifts; being autonomous (self-directed); and relating to your external world in your way– not as a copy of someone or something else. In their book *Why We Do What We Do* (?1996 Penguin USA), Edward Deci and Richard Ryan note that some of the signs that hint we are moving towards authenticity include having a

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feeling of competence and being effective, feeling free to choose based on wise decisions, and a certain connectedness to the world.

### Why Bother?

So what is it that makes authenticity so desirable? Why bother? When you strive to find and be your authentic self, you gain a certain control. The world continues to spin around and around throwing your days out of whack but you, authentic you, remain in balance. You stand ready from a central point of self control able to make decisions by considering those facets important to you. You find satisfaction and contentment through being and acting authentic. Even, especially, in times of chaos, you know where you stand because you are in control of your self.

### If You Don't Bother

Okay, so what if you don't bother? When you are not freely choosing your direction or making choices from an authentic center (your true self), others take control of your being! Whether subtle or outright, others may begin to make it seem that your duty is to be under their control, that you indeed must give up your sense of authority over self. Certainly there are some situations that are not within our ability to control (taxes, laws, work regulations, etc.), nor do we desire to. However, we can always choose how we will react to, feel about, or even overlook these situations. We also hold a great power in any situation – that is hope. When you're acting from an authentic foundation you can easily find hope. On the other hand, when you allow others control of you, when you are not acting from an authentic place, here's what can happen, and many times does (Are you showing any signs of being unauthentic?):

Low job satisfaction

Tardiness or absenteeism

Self imposed limits on work performance (Why bother doing more?) Bad or poor attitude

No motivation or motivation that is conditional on receiving something else

Low productivity

Hopelessness (Stuck in a rut)

Too much on your plate (Out of balance or alignment)

### Searching For Your Authenticity

To find your authentic self, you will work hard– it's not that easy a task. For me, even when I realized that I had to find my own personal methods that matched my strengths and personality, I struggled to be. . .me. Who was I anyway? At a training session for a utility corporation we were asked to quickly tell a story related to a time when we got results by relinquishing control. I told the story of helping my daughter to ride her two-wheeler. In short, she finally rode the thing when I stopped running along side her steadying the seat! It was a fantastic story, told with finesse. My feedback? The class thought I was

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an excellent actress who had told that story many times. I hadn't actually – the incident had only occurred two days before the training!

What I was missing was AUTHENTICITY. How could that be? It was what I valued most, being true to self! But I wasn't being true to self. In my heart of hearts, I was yearning to let Jane out! On the outside, I was acting as if. I was acting the way I thought I needed to act depending on the culture or politics of the situation. Yes, we do have to adapt...but not to the point of losing ourselves in the process! When times got rough and I was out of control...others were surprised to see Jane's survival personality coming through – and it wasn't very refined!

Sometimes self exploration shows particular actions you need to take – and taking them might prove to be painful. As you grow to a deeper appreciation and understanding of self, others may not like it one bit! Authenticity helps you to regain control of your life and this may make the controllers in your life angry, defensive, and even more controlling. Their distorted feelings, although real, come from their loss of control over you – they may still love you dearly, or value your friendship, but they must not be allowed to take your life in their hands. The essence of your authenticity is true and clear, and it becomes stronger each time it is recognized as so and each time you consult yourself over some decision.

Many authenticity seekers report that once they began taking back control, people in their lives truly important to them eventually came to respect and enjoy them even more, although the initial "coming out" caused great uneasiness in their relationships.

### How To Engage Authenticity

Keeping in mind all the great things that can and will begin happening for you in light of some of the not so great stuff, here in brief is how authenticity can be engaged and embraced in your life. ¶ You engage in an expedition of discovery which helps you to get to know yourself better than you did at the start. ¶ You work to pinpoint areas in which you haven't allowed authenticity in the past, and you consider reasons why this was so. ¶ You create a foundation with authenticity as key so that you always have a ready plan of action to engage whatever chaos comes your way. ¶ This foundation also stands strong as you encounter others who do not favor your new found authenticity or those who state they simply will not allow you to be this way. ¶ You recognize that you are a very special, genuine soul on this earth. No longer will you try to copy the actions of others. You won't need to imitate. You will be: yourself, effective, accountable. Yes! You will be all these things and more when you begin from a center of authenticity!

Authenticity improves productivity and personal fulfillment in your daily work. It diminishes feelings of hopelessness and reduces tardiness and absenteeism. These positives, and those mentioned before, are attained through authenticity because when you are true to yourself, you can rely on your autonomy in your choices, weighed carefully with your values and principles. As you respond to others, they mirror that responsiveness to you – it's catching! Authenticity yields a confidence that allows your creativity to flow and the innovation in you is unleashed. When combined with a personal plan of action and choices made from accountability, authenticity propels us along toward our vision and allows us a feeling of content. Just think of the possibilities if all of us, and our organizations too, would engage our

authenticity. Wow! Synergy in life.

Jane Miller works with People to Discover their Authentic Life Work and to use their Potential in a World of Chaos. Write to her in care of this publication or on-line at

717.228.2302 (c2003 Jane Miller)

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Jane Miller engages her gifts and talents to facilitate others toward their desired outcomes. Through her company, Miller Institute, Jane works with organizations who want improved results and with people who want to identify and use more of their potential.

## **Authentic Samurai Sword Buying Guide**

**By John Gottshall**

If you've every thought about buying a new samurai sword (I'm talking about a real samurai sword that you can really use for cutting exercises, not just to hang on the wall) you've probably have several questions. There's a plenty out there to choose from but there are a few key things to look for in a quality blade.

The most important thing is that you get a blade that has been forged using traditional construction methods and had authentic parts.

Take the Thaitsuki Nihonto swords, they're forged using a 400 year old family method, are you can normally find them for under \$1000, however people are realizing more and more that they are very high quality swords, so their prices probably won't stay low for very long.

Here are a few qualities to look for in a quality samurai sword. An authentic samurai sword should be at least a high carbon steel forge blade (like the Thaitsuki swords) or a folded steel blade. A stainless steel blade is not a blade that is forged using traditional construction methods and should only be used for decoration. Many of them look really nice, but they absolutely must not be used for any type of cutting exercise.

If the blade is not made from at high carbon forged steel or folded steel then it's most likely just stainless steel. When purchasing your authentic samurai sword, make sure that the blade is forged high carbon steel or folded steel. Many companies will tell you that they can sell you a quality authentic samurai sword made from stainless steel. Stainless steel is fine if you're only going to hang it on the wall but it's not an authentic samurai sword made using quality forging methods.

Take the Paul Chen Shinto Katana. It's a fine sword made from traditional claying methods that make it nearly impossible to break, it's a fine authentic samurai sword. Paul Chen swords are some of the best samurai swords you'll find for the money. You can literally get a sword made from traditional construction methods and authentic parts for around \$300.

At Japanese Swords 4 Samurai we have a samurai sword expert waiting to answer any questions you might have. Want to own an

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