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Vicki Davis:

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Angela Maiers:

“The most motivating thing for a child to see is a healthy confident, engaged, passionate adult standing in front of them.”

Vicki Davis:

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you’ll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: It’s Motivational Monday and we have my dear friend Angela Maiers @angelamaiers with us. Angela, how can we motivate ourselves this Monday?

ANGELA: I am wanting to wish everyone a happy Monday and I think the most motivational thing that I can say, and it isn’t an outside motivation. It’s an inside motivational reminder, and whether you’re talking to kids or you’re looking in the mirror, you’re telling yourself that your genius is needed by the world.

And so I greet all new classrooms, all new teachers with a simple statement, **you are genius and the world needs your contribution**. And I want us to really sort of take that apart if we can in the next couple of minutes and why is it so profoundly motivating?

VICKI: So here’s the first thing – you say your genius is needed, okay, I’ll tell you. This time of the year sometimes I don’t feel very smart and I don’t feel like a genius.

ANGELA: Yeah. And that’s the first motivation, what’s so exciting is that genius is not an anomaly, it’s not an event, it’s not some flash in the dark, it is your birth right, it is the moment in our lives, in our day, in our learning that we feel most alive. So to accelerate – and this is a biological process. This is not an ideological process. To accelerate our potential, to progress our ability to work with each other, to advance our humanity we must rediscover our soul.

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We must honor. And I’m using that word with emphasis; we must honor our unique genius and core. And it’s only when we do that, when we understand and embrace only what we can contribute to the world that we can change our world and the people in it. And that’s what we do as teachers, that’s the most motivating reason to jump out of bed every Monday morning. You exist to change lives and to change the world. And this is a bold ambitious goal that everybody shows up ready to do that fiercely and fully owning their genius.

VICKI: And I do believe and tell my students that – so I’m able to use Bible verses at my school so there’s a great verse that you’re God’s masterpiece made before time began for good works. (Ephesians 2:10 <http://biblehub.com/ephesians/2-10.htm>) And so I believe that each of us on this planet is an individual beautiful creation. So that does fit with genius and it definitely is needed. That’s for sure. So what’s the next piece you want to impact on us?

ANGELA: The contribution piece. Because the act of contribution, that changes us. It doesn’t only cement our learning, it immense our humanity. Because the deepest driver of human behavior are deepest fire that burns as individuals, not just as children but individuals, is the desire to know that we are essential to someone else. That something we shared, something we reveal, something we gave freely to others was needed by someone else.

So if you take all of that away, all the genius ideas or language, what I’m really talking about is show and tell. It’s rediscovering the power of show and tell where the goal wasn’t to bring the best shiniest thing in your backpack that you could reveal to others to make them feel less than.

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Your goal was other people to meet you at recess and say, “Oh my gosh, that was so awesome, can you tell me more? Can you teach me that? Can you show me that? Can you share that with me? Can you help me find that too?” That is what the web has amplified; this gigantic show and tell where we get to rediscover and share what’s in our unique backpack if you will with the world with the intension that that contribution, that that reveal will be needed and honors and appreciated and essential to someone else. And that’s how we change our world.

VICKI: And I love the word “need” because that’s really what I picked up from you that when we’re doing things, we’re doing these projects or they’re creating their apps – I mean, I’ve got these kids right now creating apps with kids in Paraguay and Australian and Canada on bravery. <http://madaboutmattering2017.wikispaces.com> But we need each person to add their perspectives so that we can be stronger. The world the doesn’t always go to the extroverts or the loud or the A-plus students. We’re all better; the extroverts, the loud and the A-plus students, which I will be included in some of those categories. We’re all better when we understand that we really need each other.

ANGELA: Absolutely. And I say this even though it’s Motivational Monday, I actually don’t say to you, “You are a genius and the world needs your contribution” as a motivational tool. I say this as a reminder, as a compelling obligation that it is our responsibility as educators to understand and embrace what only we can contribute to our student’s world and what we can contribute to the greater world because that way that we engage in the world is the greatest predictor of

how our students are going to engage in the world. And what the world needs now more than anything else, even more than college graduates or students with A-pluses.

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The world needs individuals to show up in it, brave and fierce and confident and willing to share what they know and what they have in their backpacks with the world. And that is the definition of innovation. Innovation is your invitation to share your genius with the world with the intention of changing it.

VICKI: Now, I love all of this but I have to ask you a question and I struggle with this sometimes because I work so hard for my students to know that they matter and that they're important, and they do. But it's kind of like pouring out of a pitcher without ever pouring water back in. At some point the pitcher runs dry. Do you feel like you matter?

ANGELA: Every day is a daily struggle to fill my own bucket, and it's a really big struggle for teachers and for parents because we are by nature giving to other people. But if we look at mattering as an essential need, it is food, water, shelter, air, breath to us. We would know that if we went to school on Monday and Sunday night we didn't get any sleep, we ate really bad, we didn't treat our bodies and our souls good, that we would not be able to serve our students. How many times have we not taken an invitation to go out with friends because we said, "Oh, I'd love to but I have got school on Monday."

Worthiness is a daily practice, it is something that you have to commit to from a place of discipline and fierce focus. As much as you commit to the other healthy portions of your life, you commit to eating reasonably healthy. But people do know that if your body and soul isn't fulfilled and sustained there no way even if you wanted to and were able to that you have enough energy and you have enough ability to give to someone else. And this is really important. This should motivate you to take these words seriously.

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You cannot teach, you cannot parent, you cannot lead and you certainly cannot change lives and the world from a place of unworthiness. So this is our moral obligation, not just our professional obligation to understand and embrace what we have to contribute to our student's world. This is who we are, we are educators.

VICKI: Yes, and we do matter. We do have to take care of ourselves so that we can have the strength because the stronger we are internally, the more difference we can make.

ANGELA: 100%. Even though this is to motivate with kids, the most motivation thing for a child to see is a healthy, confident, engaged, passionate adult standing in front

of them. And no child deserves less than that because there is nothing more motivating, nothing more contagious, nothing more beautiful than seeing someone in the essence of their genius and watching them work. And it makes you want to step up to your own greatness. And that's what we do every day, we are the model of the leader and the learner and the citizen we would wish them to be and we cannot do that without owning our genius.

So I want to just remind you, even if you think it's silly I want you to take these words as seriously as students have taken them. You are a genius and the world needs your contribution. And I'm honored to start your Monday reminding you of how precious you are in our lives, in our community, in our kid's lives but also in the world.

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