

Going the Extra Mile

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Our inner drive to “be the best,” to run farther, jump higher, have the best band program, or do anything better than ‘the other guy’ is ingrained in us as children. You never see a competition for “The Most Ordinary Athlete” or “The Most Common Talent.” Yet, we are, by definition, ordinary—every last one of us. *Ordinary* is defined as: “commonly encountered; usual.” Being part of the human race qualifies us all as being common; after all there are nearly seven billion of us now living on planet earth.

Still, our stomachs churn and muscles tighten at the thought of seeing ourselves as “just ordinary.” We resist this thought and want more than anything to be “special,” but what if I said it this way? Though you are one of a million, you are also one in a million. You are unique. In all your ordinary “likeness” you are one of a kind in that the combination of ordinary molecules and abilities that make you, but you have found a unique expression in the way you look, move, talk, and express yourself.

So what’s my point? It is simple. Too often we miss the obvious. Patti Digh, author of *Life is a Verb*, puts it this way, “We are our most potent at our most ordinary. And yet most of us discount our ‘ordinary’ because it is, well, ordinary. Or so we believe.”

In other words, although I am

ordinary, my ordinary is not yours and yours is not mine. In fact, we usually discount our ordinary in favor of someone else’s with false comparisons that sound something like this, “My band can’t perform an intricate program like theirs.”

“Our program can’t do what they do.” “I’m not as good a director as the person I’m replacing.” It’s pretty easy to see how self-debilitating thoughts like this can be, but even if we steer clear of such comparisons, we still can lose our confidence in false expectations.

These may go something like this, “It’s all been done before, why should I bother to come up with something new for our field show?”

“It’s another fall season, just like the last, why should I give my best?”

Author, Derek Sivers, created a beautifully executed video gone viral on the internet which says it this way, “Obvious to you. Amazing to others.” He states from his book, *Anything You Want: Anyone who has created anything knows this feeling. You experience someone else’s innovative work. It’s*

beautiful! Brilliant! Breathtaking! You’re stunned...[You say to yourself] “I never would have thought of that. How did they come up with that, its genius!” Afterwards you think, “My ideas are so obvious. I’ll never be as inventive as that.”

What could you accomplish if you took what you have to offer and made it great, with the belief and a willingness to share? Are you willing to give your best without comparison to others?

Sivers goes on to say that what we consider to be ordinary (think computer geek who performs wonders on a computer 22 hours a day, but can’t fry an egg) may not be ordinary at all—to someone else. Instead of pulling out our hair in an attempt

to come up with the ‘latest and greatest’ maybe we need to just be our best ‘ordinary.’

So what sets you apart and ignites creative inspiration to do and be more? Maybe it is simply a celebration of your ordinary qualities. What are your strengths? What makes you tick? What lights your passion and sets you on mission? Discover and celebrate these qualities and you will carve out your own place that offers your unique gift to others. And isn’t this what life—**and teaching** is all about?

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You have to believe that what you have to offer, though it may seem ordinary to you, is just what others (i.e. your students) admire and desperately need. You can play the C scale blindfolded with one hand behind your back but your beginning saxophone student hasn't a clue, which makes you look simply amazing to her (with two hands and minus the blindfold, of course).

To be successful we must change your thinking. It is the extra effort, the giving of ourselves and exceeding others' expectations that takes us further and broadens our field of influence. Listen to any success story and you'll hear how someone overcame a so-called disadvantage or "normal" attribute to become great. How? By putting in extra time, going the extra mile, persevering to the end, and holding on to an unflinching belief that they could.

What could you accomplish if you took what you have to offer and made it great, with the belief and

a willingness to share? Are you willing to give your best without comparison to others? Imagine what doors could open if you decided to give more, if you raised the bar and brought increased value to your students and the people around you, simply by celebrating ordinary you. Here's to your best year ever!



Randy served ten years as a nationally recognized high school band director and assistant marching band director at West Chester University. For over 20 years Randy has developed Marching Show Concepts as a nationally known company for quality marching band products and exceptional one-to-one services. Randy exemplifies an expertise and standard of excellence that is well known and respected throughout the music industry. He is an accomplished clinician, adjudicator and drill designer who continues to display his talents in the MSC collection of products and services.