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Book Review

Inspire: The Universal Path for Leading Yourself and Others

Adam Galinsky, Harper Collins Publishers (2025)

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Aarti Sharma^{a*}

^a Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Kasturi Ram College of Higher Education, Delhi, India.

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*Corresponding Author:
aarti768@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

In *Inspire: The Universal Path for Leading Yourself and Others*, Adam Galinsky redefines inspirational leadership by questioning the idea that it's a natural gift. He argues instead that it is a learnable skill supported by research, one that anyone can develop with intentional effort. His approach centers on three key psychological drives: purpose, security, and connection. Galinsky translates these drives into three adaptable leadership types: the Visionary, the Exemplar, and the Mentor. Effective leaders embrace these roles to meet their teams' needs. The Visionary creates purpose by sharing a clear, meaningful vision for the future. The Exemplar offers security with consistent, principled actions that serve as a stable support during times of uncertainty. The Mentor fosters connection by enhancing individual skills and strengthening group bonds.

Through the Inspire Continuum, Galinsky shows that how well leaders address these basic drives affects whether they energize or demoralize their teams. He also points out the Leader Amplification Effect, which explains how leaders' small words and actions can have a strong emotional impact. This principle highlights the importance of thoughtful leadership, as even minor actions can greatly inspire or discourage people.

By combining practical methods with solid psychological research, Inspire acts as a hands-on guide for developing these leadership skills through everyday choices. The book views leadership not as a title but as a commitment to continuous self-improvement. It offers an accessible, insightful, and action-focused resource for those who want to lead with purpose and genuine impact.

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Review

Adam Galinsky's ***Inspire: The Universal Path for Leading Yourself and Others*** overturns a common but limiting belief about leadership: that the ability to inspire is something you're either born with or without. Through compelling research and real-world examples, Galinsky makes a convincing argument that inspirational leadership is actually a learnable skill – one that anyone can develop with intention and practice, regardless of their natural personality or charisma.

Three Essential Leadership Roles

What sets this book apart is its grounded, psychologically informed approach. Galinsky identifies three fundamental human needs that all effective leaders must address: our need for meaning, our need for security, and our need to belong. He then translates these needs into three practical leadership roles that anyone can step into:

1. **The Visionary** speaks to our desire for purpose by creating a clear, inspiring vision of what's possible. This role helps people see how their daily efforts contribute to something larger and more meaningful than just completing tasks.
2. **The Exemplar** addresses our need for stability by showing up with reliable, courageous consistency. This leader becomes the person teams can depend on when everything feels uncertain – a source of confidence and calm in challenging times.
3. **The Mentor** satisfies our need for connection by genuinely investing in each person's development while simultaneously building a strong sense of team unity. This role makes people feel both individually valued and part of something bigger than themselves.

The beauty of this framework is its accessibility. It's straightforward enough that you can imme-

diately start applying it, yet nuanced enough to support deep, lasting leadership growth.

Key Insights That Change Perspective

Beyond the core framework, Galinsky introduces ideas that genuinely shift how you think about leadership. The Inspire Continuum clearly maps the relationship between meeting these human needs and the motivation levels you'll see in your team - essentially showing you exactly where your efforts will make the most difference.

But the most powerful concept is the Leader Amplification Effect. This idea serves as both a reality check and an opportunity. Here's the truth: when you're leading others, everything you do gets magnified. That throwaway comment you didn't think twice about? Someone on your team might still be thinking about it days later. The meeting where you seemed checked out? People noticed and drew conclusions. It's somewhat unsettling to realize your actions carry this much weight, but it's also empowering, once you understand this dynamic, you can use it intentionally to energize and motivate rather than inadvertently discourage.

Inspire works because Galinsky doesn't just share theory—he connects solid research to practical strategies you can implement immediately. He repositions leadership not as something tied to your job title or place on the org chart, but as an ongoing practice of personal growth shaped by the choices you make every single day.

For anyone trying to lead more effectively—whether you're running a company, managing a small team, or guiding a community project, this book offers a clear path forward. It's simultaneously a hands-on manual and an invitation to think differently about what leadership really means and what you're capable of becoming.

- Aarti Sharma