

Spinach Between Your Teeth

by Dr. Marc Swerdlick

Would YOU want a friend to let you know that you had spinach stuck between your teeth? Most folks first respond with a resounding “YES,” but the truth of the matter is that most folks feel a sense of resentment for the spinach spotter. Why? The spinach spotter is perceived as having been “unnecessarily” focused in on the offender’s mouth. Additionally, the spinach spotter is also perceived as being “judgmental” and/or “critical.”

If the spinach spotter didn’t pipe up, you’d still be walking around looking, well, kind of silly. In reality, you should be thanking the spinach spotter rather than being resentful. But that’s not how most people operate. In a perfect world, we’d each have someone in our life who’d be at our beckon call, and who would “review” us in the most critical manner possible. If we lived in a futuristic world like *The Jetson’s*, we might even own a machine that scans us before we leave our house, and tells us if we have any “ear corn” or a piece of nasal debris that’s about to leap for freedom.

When you tell someone that they look good or that they’re doing something right, they smile and thank you for your positive comment. But if you tell someone that they have spinach between their teeth (thus saving someone embarrassment) or tell them that they’re doing something wrong, they look at you as being negative. The funny thing is that critical comments - made with the best of intentions, and presented in a respectful manner, are really what get you from good to great. How?

When someone is kind enough to tell you that you have spinach between your teeth, what they are doing is making you more aware of something that you may have overlooked (i.e. checking your teeth after eating). The same holds true in other areas of life in which someone is kind enough to let you know that - metaphorically speaking, there’s a dandelion growing in your rose garden.

The most successful people I know are folks who accept criticism, and embrace the critic. The failures in life do just the opposite. In fact, offenders tend to bond together in reaction to a critic (the spinach spotter). I see and experience this phenomenon a regular basis, and I will tell you that, people who **REACT** to criticism, are the same folks who will never make it far up the ladder of success.

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Should ALL criticism be unconditionally accepted?

NO!

The only folks who are allowed to criticize you are people who are farther up the ladder of success in a specific area of life (business, personal, etc.). In other words, the largest fast food chain in the world generates far more revenue than the largest high-end steak house chain in the world, but that doesn't mean that the fast food boys are qualified to give advice to the steak house boys. Even within the high-end steak house arena are sub-arenas that have their own unique set of rules and circumstances. The point: Anyone from whom you accept advice had better be uniquely qualified to give it.

I find it interesting how certain folks who should be taking advice from Person X, defer instead to the advice from a well-known "guru" who made his fortune by selling spiritual enhancement materials. Why would someone do something so foolish? Simple: They want to feel good about themselves, and will do anything and everything to avoid self-analysis and self-critique.

When I work with CEO's and/or individuals who are looking for a kick in the pants, I don't walk up to them and blow rose petals in their face. I look at their circumstances like a dermatologist looks at a tiny mole on your skin – through magnification. Not only do you see the spinach between their teeth, but you also notice a bunch of other stuff that doesn't look so pretty.

It takes thick skin to be a spinach spotter. You quickly find out who your friends are, and even more rapidly - take note of which ship to abandon before it sinks. As the bow of the ship disappears beneath the ocean's surface, there is always one last glimpse at the offender standing on the deck (still with the spinach between his teeth) – surrounded by his faithful lackeys, and sometimes even his spouse. There they stand as one – united in obstinacy and foolishness.

They'd rather sink to the ocean's floor than acknowledge and embrace the spinach spotter.

I guarantee you know offenders who always seem to have spinach between their teeth. They are blatantly cannibalizing various aspects of their life. Anyone brave enough to approach them quickly gets slapped to the curb. The sad fact is that most people don't want to be helped. If they

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accept help, they are admitting that they are with fault – that they don't know all the answers – that they may have made some errors.

Acknowledging errors and fault not easy for someone who lacks self-esteem, self-confidence, and integrity. And the worst part of all is that we are talking about most people – maybe even you. Most people just want to be told that IT's okay, and that THEY are okay. Neither is usually true...unless you've just attended that famous guru's "*Tap Your Inner Double-Secret Super Power*" seminar.

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Dr. Swerdlick is a well-known and sought after professional speaker, current member of The National Speakers Association, International Speakers Network, Global Speakers Federation, and The National Speakers Association of Illinois. Dr. Marc is known for his directive, strategic "bullet-like" approach to business, professional, and personal betterment. Dr. Marc doesn't just tell you that you need to make a change: He tells you how to get it done.

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