

*“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”  
– Winston Churchill*

Our confidence levels soar when we act courageously. Everyone has things which they are afraid of in varying degrees. Interestingly, what we each fear to do will open a whole new world of opportunities if only we were bold enough to face it. When you feel and show courage, you disregard your fear – therefore acting with bravery. Your convictions are strong enough for you to follow through even though there may be uncertainty in respect of the outcome of your actions.

Courage is widely regarded as an important spiritual quality that one needs to have. "You have passed through the two hardest tests on the spiritual road: the patience to wait for the right moment and the courage not to be disappointed with what you encounter " - Paulo Coelho.

Have you ever wondered how different life would be for you now if you feared less and had more faith to really go for what you want? Were you to dare to get uncomfortable in your comfort zone and do what you would do if only you were not afraid? This is a sign of good personal leadership. We all have beliefs about a lot of things, yet we often miss many opportunities simply because we lack the courage to pursue. Stephen Kaplan offers a personal definition for leadership: “Leadership is the ability to figure out what you believe and then summon the courage to appropriately act on those beliefs. These actions must be geared to adding value to an enterprise and making a positive impact on others’<sup>1</sup>.

Courage is needed in every area of our life because we often feel afraid to follow our hunches and work towards our dreams, just in case things do not turn out the way we would wish them to. We are cautious because it may result in a drastic shift from how we currently see ourselves and how people relate to us. Our family, friends and dare I say people who may not like us or even know us that well. We secretly worry about what they will say. We are consumed and spend a lot of resources concerned about what might go wrong. This may make sense ‘logically’ yet it is an unhealthy approach. Imagine a world where no one took action or followed through on ideas simply because of the words “what if”? The fact is that change is inevitable – we just have a hard time creating the change we

want and that is exactly what having courage will do for us! Unfortunately this has the potential to and often steals our joy and ability to live a life of abundance.

“Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.” — Lao Tzu. Osho describes courage as the joy of living dangerously!

Your experience of personal relationships, financial freedom, health and others are closely linked to how courageous you have been to date. “The cave that you fear to enter holds the treasure that you seek” - Joseph Campbell. A lot of successful people have had to act with courage in order to achieve what they have. Media proprietor Oprah Winfrey reminds us that “you get from this life what you have the courage to ask for”. If this is true, what is preventing the vast majority of people who do not seem to be asking for much from life? It's the ‘F’ word; four-letters: fear! Melanie Greenberg Ph.D offers 6 attributes of courage, one of which is feeling fear yet choosing to act!

According to Susan Jeffers, author of the self-help classic *Feel the fear and do it anyway*, “at the bottom of every one of your fears is the fear that you cannot handle whatever life may bring you.” Basically, that you will fail!

Napoleon Hill in 1937 identified six basic human fears and I believe these would not be different in this century. Ranking second, after the fear of poverty was the fear of criticism. We all want to be liked and that is ok. I have yet to meet a person who enjoys being ridiculed or laughed at. What can however be unhelpful is turning it into an obsession and making that your primary aim over and above everything else. “But we need to be aware of when our desire to be liked is keeping us from having the confidence and courage to take on challenging assignments, present our capabilities, deal with tough personal issues, and push the envelope on our ideas – Sheila Blalock “Dare”.

The other four basic fears identified by Napoleon Hill are: old age, ill-health, loss of love and death. In reality, most of the things we fear will not happen in the manner that we think because we just cannot predict the future. However, it can feel like it has already taking place. How so? People can be so anxious and worry about all the possible negative eventualities that they create the experience in the mind that is so real that it prevents them from moving forward and often then

brings into reality the very thing they feared. This happens because they give it so much attention and energy that it gives birth to all that they are imagined. This is illustrated by Job when he confesses: For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. (Job 3:25-26). It says in Chapter 1:5..... for Job said it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts”.

The truth is that no amount of fear and worry will make anyone immune to these experiences. Ironically, it can cause us to bring about the very situations we seek so desperately to avoid.

Dr Brene Brown, an American scholar and author goes to the root of the definition of courage; originating from the Latin word ‘cor’, meaning from the heart. For her, Courage then becomes “to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart.” Every time we stop short of being courageous, we are robbing the world of who we really are and hiding our light! Fear covers our greatness and leaves us in darkness whilst the light of love will allow it to shine brightly on the world.

Irish story – A man turned in heaven and asked to be let in; St Peter said ok, but first show us your scares to which the man replied, Scars? I don’t have any! St Peter exclaimed “was there nothing worth fighting for?”

Faith in God and his word can give us the tools needed to overcome our fears as it clearly teaches that he does not want fear to take over us. 2 Tim 1:7 – “For God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.”

Fear takes place in our subconscious mind and because this part of the mind seeks to protect you. It will do almost anything to keep you in the path of least resistance where everything feels safe and familiar to you. This is why it can be so difficult to change. It goes to great lengths to avoid you getting involved in anything that is new or potentially poses a risk to your ‘safety’ which is interpreted as what you already know. This is the case even if the risk is minimal in reality yet blown out of proportion by your imagination. The subconscious mind is unable to differentiate between the real and unreal – it just believes and accept whatever you decide to impress upon it.

“It takes courage ... to endure the sharp pains of self discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.”

Marianne Williamson. “Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of ‘A Course in Miracles’”

“What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself” – Abraham Maslow.

Is it not time you stepped into your greatness? Whatever disappointment and perceived failures who have experienced will have offered some great lessons to use in the future and will make your success more inspiring. Many of the people widely regarded as achievers by all standards have also had their fair share of setbacks and yet their ability to overcome and still push on in pursuit of their dreams. Andrew Carnegie who was at one point the richest man in the world, believed that people who experienced hardships had an advantages over those that did not. According to him, this advantage is the learnings of how they got through the difficult times.

Whatever it is that you need courage for, trust and believe that you already possess it. All this is required is that you dig deep and seek until you find it. Your mind may tell you otherwise and there’s a very good reason for that. Your mind will only know what you have experienced which is always from your past.

Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you1’.

Courage is what is required for you to be able to press on into the greatness that is your destiny; you may have caught glimpses of it and be totally frightened. Others may have hinted it to you in your childhood or after an achievement. Whether it is to do with relationships which require healing, forgiveness, a change in career or a move to another location, you know more than anyone what you desire in secret.

## **The courage to know yourself**

Start to assess some of the beliefs you have about life and what you can achieve. Those around, especially as you were growing up, would have passed on ideas and beliefs. These inherited beliefs often hold us back as they limit our view of what is possible for us. Osho in 'Courage' presents this challenging thought "All beliefs are borrowed, others have given them to you; they are not your flowerings. And how can a borrowed thing lead you toward the real?"

You must do your own investigation of truth – Baha'i teachings

You will never know you are in the world until you know thyself – Dr John Henry Clarke

Dr Iyanla Vanzant says we are to work on ourselves as that is where it begins: "You must first look within yourself to eliminate the fear, the anger the imbalance in your life. Then and only then can you move forward to create peacefully and powerfully the changes needed in the world."

Do not allow yourself to be disheartened by any failure as long as you have done your best! (Mother Teresa)

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It seems that the necessary thing to do is not to fear mistakes, to plunge in, to do the best that one can, hoping to learn enough from blunders to correct them eventually. - Abraham Maslow

Listen to this encouragement and hold on to it until you can say you did it: Ezra 10:4 Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.

## **Love life more than your fear of death**

Courage is about taking a risk and making a choice that will make you more alive.... Lee Ann Womack put it beautifully when she sang and encouraged us with the words "when you get the choice to sit it out or dance, I hope you dance!" The late Dr Maya Angelou says the words of that song are those she would tell her daughter if she had one and she introduced it to her good friend that she has

been a mentor to; Oprah Winfrey! In an interview by Alison Beard of the Harvard Business Review, Dr Angelou talked about a great lesson from her mother “I would say she encouraged me to develop courage; and she taught me by being courageous herself. And after years of leaving her and, I think, becoming courageous, I realized that one isn’t born with courage. One develops it. You develop courage by doing courageous things, small things, but things that cost you some exertion– mental and, I suppose, spiritual exertion.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change what I can and the wisdom to know the difference: The Serenity Prayer.

### 3 steps to Face the things you fear

What are you worried about or afraid of?

What’s the worst that can happen?

What can you do to prevent it or deal with it courageously?