

Courage in the Midst of Fear

By Sandra Ford Walston, The Courage Expert

Root of Courage

One of the four cardinal virtues of the Classical world, courage has diminished in importance in these postmodern times as most people equate this important virtue with acts of bravado in the face of fear. By limiting courage in this way, we fail to perceive the courageous aspects of exploring new ideas for a project, breaking from consensus, transcending rejection or initiating progress in the face of complacency.

The word “courage” comes from the French word *corage*, meaning “heart and spirit.” So courage is really about acting from *your* heart and spirit — from the center of *your* being — the true identity hidden beneath the false self of the ego. By delving into the heart and spirit of our true identities, we begin to recognize our innate courage as well as the ego’s insidious control mechanisms, which capitalize on fear and insecurity. As we recognize the fears that the ego uses to justify its self-importance, we undermine the ego’s power to dominate our lives and begin to manifest our true identities. We discover the personal truth within our being and recognize courage, as the key to spiritual truth.

Fear Paralyzes the Heart

What percentage of your life is filled with regrets? Regrets represent the times in our lives when we allow fearful insecurities to undermine the courageous choice. Recognizing regrets, the task, then, is to cultivate courage and then trust that going for it is better than dying without it. This is the difference between heart and mind. Learning to stay centered in the present may not banish fear or the blame it spawns, but you will at least begin to diminish the tendencies that keep you stuck in fear. Fear blocks and paralyzes the heart; therefore, fear blocks courage. Slowing down makes the difference.

The process of slowing down puts us in touch with reality — our own everyday issues instead of the sensationalism of the media culture. This astonishing yet simple process releases you from inner tyranny of old fear-based habits and scripts, uncovering a deep set of self-actuating principles. Marianne Williamson writes in *The Gift of Change*, “We are lifted from weak to strong; we are lifted from lack to abundance; we are lifted from pain to peace; we are lifted from fear to love. None of this happens in an instant, but over time, through the daily process of living.”

Many contemplative practices can help initiate this transformative process—sacred reading, chanting, Tai Chi, hiking, a silent retreat and so on. Any choice that moves you beyond words and thoughts and into the inner silence of the heart allows the fears created by the ego to dissipate. “Within each experience of pain or negativity is the opportunity to challenge the perception that lies behind it, the fear that lies behind it, and to choose to learn with wisdom. The fear will not vanish immediately, but it will disintegrate as you work with courage. When fear ceases to scare you, it cannot stay,” says Gary Zukav in *The Seat of the Soul*. The stillness found in contemplation provides a maturity to your inner experience thereby accelerating your spiritual courage.

Courage Cradles Your Actions

Fear is a manmade creation just like slavery, apartheid and poverty. The dualistic concept of fear versus courage keeps us stuck within the mental limitations of ego. When human beings claim their courage, they begin to experience the heart and spirit truth that transcends the duality of the mind. In recognizing transcendent truth, we begin to see that fear is simply an illusion used by the ego to maintain its position of control, and this recognition dissolves fear, allowing love to fill our hearts. This is the experience of “dying to self.”

As courage consciousness matures in your life and in your organization, you will notice huge shifts in your perspective about fear. You will find courage cradles your actions, allowing you to validate the choice of courage consciousness over attachments that trigger life’s unwanted fears.

Soon, with an inner gaze, we discover that there is courage in the midst of fear. It is found in the simplicity of just being quietly centered in God’s light, and that takes courage! “Rise up; This matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.” Ezra 10:4

About the Author:

Sandra Ford Walston, The Courage Expert, innovator of STUCKThinking™, is an organizational effectiveness/learning consultant, speaker, corporate trainer and courage coach. Specializing in understanding courage behaviors, individual personalities and leadership styles that focus on the tricks and traps of the human condition, the author/trainer facilitates individuals and groups in discovering their hidden talents. She is the internationally published author of bestseller, *Courage: The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman/Reclaiming the Forgotten Virtue* (Greece and Brazil). Her second book is currently agent represented. She is qualified to administer and interpret the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and is a certified Enneagram teacher. Currently she is a candidate for an Honorary Doctorate Degree.

Sandra provides skill-based programs for public and private businesses, including Caterpillar, Inc., Auburn University, Procter & Gamble, Wyoming Department of Health Public Nurses, Farmers Insurance, Wide Open West and Hitachi Consulting. For eleven years she taught Continuing Professional Education courses for the Colorado Society of CPAs and she returns to the University of Denver Graduate Tax Program in 2009. To learn more about how Sandra can help your business cultivate success or to purchase a copy of her first book, visit www.walstoncourage.com or contact her 303.696.1010 or swalston@walstoncourage.com.