

Are You “in the Hallway?”

“When one door closes, another door opens.” How many of us have heard that statement when facing a particularly difficult obstacle? If you are in the midst of dealing with a difficult member of your community, confronting a challenge in your family or facing a new calling, that goodwill statement probably does not help much to quell anxiety. After all, the real issue is not about whether the door is opening or closing, but *how you deal with the place in between*. You may know this place as “closing off” or “going underground”— I have even heard it called “the room of a thousand demons.” It’s as if the door is locked from the inside. I speak of this stuck or trapped state of inertia as “hell in the hallway.”

Some doors close in a necessary and positive way, such as when you transfer your skills to a new life mission or complete a certificate that enhances your résumé. More commonly in our minds, the closed door represents a negative event such as relocating from a wonderful congregation or an inability to come to an agreement with a complicated community issue. During these times, we often find ourselves trying to heave the next door open by force. Determined to do whatever it takes to overcome this barrier, you might be vaguely aware that you are forcing the issue. If you are alert, your use of force (sense of discomfort) will tell you that this opportunity is probably not the right choice for you.

Hell in the hallway, despite the frustration and sense of loss, provides a chance for introspection. This will shed light on your true heart and spirit intentions.

We women often hold ourselves to a higher standard, which puts us under undue pressure. This pressure to achieve and succeed insists that we push wholeheartedly to open a door. The paradox is that by tapping into the reservoir of courage that already exists in each and every one of us we can open and close all doors with greater ease.

Consider slowing down to examine your spiritual and professional path by asking a difficult question: *What is the courageous conversation I am not having?* Will you discover that you are stuck in apathy, self-doubt, blame or full-blown denial that is holding you in the hallway without even noticing the doors? Once you have declared your willingness to confront your personal obstacles you have moved into courageous intention and the path ahead is immediately clear. Fear is nothing more than being stuck, and being stuck is inertia. So will you stay in the hallway or make a choice to open the door? “Choices determine consequences,” Dr. Hawkins writes, “which is a mechanism that is really impersonal and operates automatically.... One then realizes that there is no hand on the tiller but one’s own and that ‘I myself am heaven and hell.’”¹ What positive lifestyle choices have you made to align your life with your heart? You must *act* to begin the courage process.

Recall and list some of the times you found yourself in the hallway wondering if and where the next door would open. What patterns do you see? What are your feelings?

Courage opens doors. You have the answers that brought you to the hallway; they have always been accessible. Perhaps you’re where you are because, in reality, most growth in consciousness comes in the lonely hallway. Pacing in the hallway, reassessing your goals, delving deeper into your values — this may be the place where you discover your inner calling.

Grant yourself perspective, the ability to see, be in and use the hallway as a positive growth opportunity. It is never the place to stay, but rest and reflect. Time in this hallway acts as a foil to the animated energy we need to claim the courage to act on what we know must be done. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; God will never leave you nor forsake you,” Deuteronomy 31:6.

Awaken from the poppy field of inertia, find your essence — your core — by applying courage! Giving yourself permission to claim and apply your courage empowers you and invites new challenges. It is a perfect starting place if you want to multiply your talents and effectiveness, find your life’s meaning and escalate your success at work. The door is open. What are you waiting for?

About the Author

Sandra Ford Walston, known as The Courage Expert and innovator of StuckThinking™, is a learning consultant, corporate trainer and courage coach. Sandra’s expertise allows her to focus on the tricks and traps of the human condition through recognizing and interpreting courage behaviors, courageous leadership and individual personality and leadership styles. As such, she is a sought-after speaker for companies and institutions seeking conscious change through personnel development. The internationally published author of bestseller *COURAGE* and an honored author selected for Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, Sandra facilitates individuals and groups to discover the power and inspiration of their everyday courage.

Published in magazines such as “Chief Learning Officer,” “Training & Development” and “Strategic Finance,” she also provides skills-based programs for some of the most respected public and private blue-chip businesses and organizations in the world such as IBM, Caterpillar, Inc., Internal Auditors, Hensel Phelps, Wide Open West, and Institute of Management Accounts.

STUCK 12 Steps Up the Leadership Ladder, Sandra’s follow-up book to *COURAGE*, is directed at any woman, regardless of title or credentials, who wishes to grow professionally by introducing courage actions at work. Her third book, *FACE IT! 12 Obstacles that Hold You Back on the Job* confirms that what holds you back on the job is the same as what hinders achievement—the reluctance to face and live a courageous life.

Sandra is qualified to administer and interpret the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, is a certified Enneagram teacher, and an instructor at the University of Denver. She can be reached at www.sandrawalston.com where she posts a courage blog and courage newsletter.

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¹ Hawkins, David, M.D., Ph.D., *Truth vs Falsehood: How to Tell the Difference*, Toronto, ON: Axial Publishing Canada, 2005, 253.