

Excerpt from

“Introduction: Assessing Your Personal Assets at Work”

... True courage comes from within, not from intellectual prowess, education, titles, age or credentials. True courage springs from your deepest values, motivations and attitudes—what many teachers refer to as the Authentic Self. Ironically, in order to step up the leadership ladder to advance in your career, you must delve deeper into your Self to find a solid foundation that supports living a courageous life. The real challenge is to act on the insights only such self-realization will bring.

There is no “one size fits all” formula for overcoming obstacles at work. The size and importance of them change as does our capacity to deal with them. Only by journeying inward can we each identify the appropriate courage action that will advance our lives and careers beyond the obstacles we face at any given moment. “Our denial, or unwillingness to look deeply at our own issues,” notes Marianne Williamson, “reflects a naïve hope that if we don’t look at our wounds, they’ll go away by themselves. It takes ‘emotional courage’ to look deeply into ourselves and face what’s there.”¹ The cure for denial is simply the courage to know ourselves well. The more profound the self-realization, the more familiar we become with the transformative power of courage. By recognizing the easy access we have to personal courage, the more capable we are of transforming our careers or reinventing our lives at work.

Once you begin this journey inward in search of your own courage, ask yourself, “What is my real work?” Your true work revolves around being genuine in all you do *in spite of others* in the environment or the organizational atmosphere. This is not as easy as it may sound—nor is it as difficult! By combining true “heart and spirit” courage with authenticity, you discover the essence of who you are and your most defining level. You then begin to recognize the mask of “scripts” that have multiplied over time to define and obscure your identity. They have limited an honest and clear vision of who you really are: not a character in a B-movie created from scripts but someone capable of real introspection. Once you begin to recognize the B-movie script for the obstacle that

it is, the inner power of personal courage enables you to be able to see great opportunities in the workplace and in life.

As the inner conflict between your authentic self and your movie persona recedes with self-realization, the energy it once consumed becomes available, allowing you to increasingly reveal your full potential. Beyond freeing up wasted energy, you create positive energy that feeds and strengthens your courage. (After all, courage is a virtue, and “virtue” in Latin means “energy.”) Paradoxically, hiding your courage drains energy.

Our fast-paced culture encourages us to identify ourselves with what we do. “What do you do?” is frequently one of the first things we ask when we are introduced to someone new. *Doing* generally involves a list of things to accomplish—earning another certification, landing a new account, securing another degree—and the sooner the better. Unfortunately, *doing* narrows the possibility of defining our dreams with clarity. If we can’t dream of what we want in life, we can’t achieve it. “Our problem is that we get wrapped up in what we are doing and why we are doing it—analyzing it, planning, worrying about it—so that we lose the joy that is always available.”² It takes courage to detach from the results of our actions, to let go of *doing*.

By contrast, *being* comes from a peaceful inner space that genuinely reveals who we are and really want to be, found in “the depths of our being, where we come face to face with ourselves, our weaknesses, and with ultimate mystery,”³ says author Wayne Teasdale. Eckhart Tolle’s insightful teachings also stress the importance of being: “The collective disease of humanity is that people are so engrossed in what happens, so hypnotized by the world of fluctuating forms, so absorbed in the content of their lives, they have forgotten the essence, that which is beyond content, beyond form, beyond thought.”⁴ Rediscovering this essence requires a different model than society’s “just do it” approach; we must adopt a model of being. To do this requires some type of contemplative practice whereby we exchange thinking for being, knowing and understanding. With this type of personal exploration we form a perspective of personal integrity in which we discard false scripts, diminish setbacks, recognize habitual obstacles and begin to live a vibrant, rewarding life. Tolle continues, “When you are present, when your attention is fully and intensely in the Now, Being can be felt, but it can never be understood mentally.”⁵

Psychologists have known for a long time that habitual thinking causes suffering. This can be especially true at work where others are involved in the same practice.

“Compulsive thinking has become a collective disease. Your whole sense of who you are is then derived from mind activity,”⁶ says Tolle.

When you have taken the first step to meet and claim yourself at a deeper level, you can claim the courage that empowers you to confront others’ limiting perceptions; paradoxically, this also allows you to let go of your attachment to those perceptions and move on. The value of this in the workplace is obvious and freeing.

Experiencing a truly rewarding work life does not depend so much on what you do but on how you approach what you do for the long run. Discovering who you are at your most intimate levels, what you value, both in yourself and in a career, how to discern what is false from what is enduring and real at your center, and how to manifest all this in your best possible work situation *is* achievable through everyday acts of everyday courage.

¹ Williamson, Marianne, *The Gift of Change: Spiritual Guidance for a Radically New Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2004), 92.

² Iachetta, S. Stephanie, *The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living: excerpts from the works of Father Thomas Keating*, (New York: Continuum, 2003), 238.

³ Teasdale, Wayne, *The Mystic Heart*, (Novato, CA, New World Library, 1999, 2001), 18.

⁴ Tolle, Eckhart, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*, (New York: Dutton, 2005), 220.

⁵ Tolle, Eckhart, *The Power of NOW* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1999), 13 and 154.

⁶ Tolle, Eckhart, *The Power of NOW* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1999), 111.