

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, is an international speaker and author, human potential consultant, corporate trainer and behavioral coach. Sandra’s expertise allows her to focus on the tricks and traps of the human condition through recognizing and interpreting courage behaviors and courageous leadership styles.

Featured on the speaker circuit as witty, provocative, concrete and insightful, she has sparked positive change in the lives of thousands of leaders each year. Sandra 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., Institute of Internal Auditors, Hensel Phelps, Wide Open West, Agrium, Inc., Virginia Commonwealth University, Xanterra Parks & Resorts®, Procter and Gamble, Hitachi Consulting, US Bank, Healthcare Association of New York State, Institute of Management Accountants, and Delta Kappa Gamma International Society.



The internationally published author of bestseller *COURAGE The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman* 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.

The COURAGE Difference at Work: A Unique Success Guide for Women, 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 Courageous Actions that Bring Success at Work and Beyond* 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 published in magazines such as *Chief Learning Officer*, *Training & Development*, *HR Matters*, *Malaysia*, and *Strategic Finance*.

Sandra is a certified Newfield Network coach and certified to administer and interpret the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® along with the Enneagram. She also instructs at the University of Denver.

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