

Courage

The courageous choose to do what is right rather than what is expedient.

Courage is something each of us has a choice in making an integral part of our character. You don't need to perform some act of heroism to be courageous. Courage is facing and dealing with anything dangerous, difficult, or painful. What many don't realize is that courage is unique to each of us.

Individual perceptions of courage may vary. Something that may not be considered an act of courage for one person, could be for another. Some people have developed a high risk tolerance or their life experiences have been such that they have to face many difficulties, endure painful experiences, or have been involved in dangerous situations or occupations. From their life experiences, courage may be defined by a much different standard. While it may be an act of courage for one person to sail solo around the world, for another, courage may be learning to swim with a heightened fear of drowning. An ice skater is afraid to speak in public; a public

speaker is terrified of putting on skates. Each act takes an equal amount of courage. There is no universal standard that defines an act of courage. Courage is personal.

Too, it is important for you to stretch your limits and get outside your comfort zone to participate in life instead of becoming a bystander, watching others experience the exhilaration of accomplishing something that took courage. It could be you if you're willing; you don't need to watch and envy. And, if you fail in one attempt, keep pressing on until you've mustered the courage to succeed. Each failure gets you closer to success.

Courage is found not only in great acts of public heroism, but also in the smallest decisions and actions. To develop the courage within you, consider the following *Mistakes to Avoid* as well as the *Steps to Success*.

Mistakes to Avoid:

- ***Let past failure or unsubstantiated fears keep you from acting courageously.*** Result: Remain trapped by the past and frozen by your fear. Miss the thrill of successfully challenging your fears, moving forward, exploring new possibilities, and embarking on great adventures.
- ***Allow others to define courage for you.*** Result: Omit thinking for your self, and submit to what others think. Ignore the person you want to be – become the person they want you to be.
- ***Confuse stupid acts with acts of courage.*** Result: Unnecessarily risk the things you value, like your job, your car, your relationships, your life, or your well-being to impress other people.
- ***Settle for status quo.*** Result: Stay in your comfort zone. Envy others for their courage, and complain at your role as a perpetual bystander.
- ***Staunchly resist opportunities to learn and grow.*** Result: Risk nothing out of the ordinary and stay within the confines of your limited boundaries.
- ***View all obstacles as insurmountable.*** Result: Do not risk failure. Give up before you try! You will not do anything to improve your self-esteem, but you will feel safe.
- ***Resist getting professional help for unrealistic or debilitating fears.*** Result: Imprison yourself in an inescapable cell of anxiety and fear.

Steps to Success:

1. **Identify the areas in which you need or want to develop courage.** Questions to ask: What do I hope to achieve? Do I want to develop greater physical courage, or do I want to strengthen my mental courage? What specific challenges do I want to face? Can I list these in order from simple to complex? Will I gain confidence if I tackle the least difficult or least painful challenges first? Where will I begin?
2. **Identify the strengths/skills you will need and the steps you will take to succeed.** Questions to ask: What strengths/skills do I possess that will help me overcome this challenge? What strengths/skills do I lack and how can I develop them? Is there someone I trust who can help me? How will I proceed, once I have the necessary skills? Can I identify reasonable progressive steps for the process? Are reliable resources available that address this issue? If so, what can I learn from them?
3. **Identify the best that could happen and the worst that could happen if you move forward.** Questions to ask: Are my projections realistic? Have my fears diminished the best-case scenario or exaggerated the worst-case scenario? Do the potential benefits outweigh the risks?
4. **Make a decision to move ahead or wait.** Questions to ask: Can I accept and move through the fear? What do I have to gain by facing my fear? What do I have to lose by facing my fear? Can I cope with the difficulty or pain of facing this challenge now? Are the time and circumstances

right? Will I be able to withdraw from the process, if necessary, and, if so, at what point? If not, how will I deal with having to move forward? How will I feel if I succeed? How will I feel if I fail? What is my back-up plan if my first attempt falls short of the mark?

5. **Obtain the necessary resources to overcome the dangers or difficulty and/or ease a possible painful result.** Questions to ask: Do I have enough information or knowledge? Do I have a trusted advisor to help guide me through this? Do I have a willing support system in place to help me through the tough times? If not, would I benefit from having one? Should I seek professional help? Where can I find reliable references?
6. **Accept that change is difficult and be patient with yourself.** Questions to ask: Are my expectations realistic? Have I allowed sufficient time to prepare for this effort? Am I prepared to persist in this until I meet my objective?

- 1.) What are 2 of the best steps to courage? Why do you think so?
- 2.) What would happen in your life if you took those steps?