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THE NEW IMPERATIVE OF ONENESS

WE HAVE BEEN LIVING with an illusion: that we are separate. Whenever we experience pain or sadness, it is because we have become separated from what, or whom, we love. And whenever we are inspired or joyful, it is because we are one with what, or whom, we love. All human challenges and successes can be explained through this awareness.

When we are in love with someone, it is as if we are one: two souls, one flame. That is because we are.

When we love doing something, or something makes our hearts soar, we feel as if we are one with it, because we are.

When we ache over the imperiled state of nature or the rising level of violence in the world, we ache because we feel the same pain. We share it because we are one.

Imagine a bright, sunny day. You are relaxing at your favorite sidewalk bistro. The enticing shrimp cocktail you ordered arrives, and you marvel at its beauty and presentation. As you relish the gift of brilliance from your chef, your mind wanders. You ask

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten we belong to each other.

Mother Teresa



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yourself the question that often crosses your mind when you encounter creativity, excellence, or mastery: “How do they do that?” In this case, you wonder, “Where did this food come from? What did it take to prepare it so beautifully? Who was involved in making this special treat?” In your reverie, you are transported far away, to seafaring nations and peoples. More than a billion people reside within 100 miles of the ocean, from which many of them derive their livelihoods, while all depend on a measure of stability between sea and land.

World shrimp production has ballooned from 2.9 million metric tons to 4.5 million in the past 15 years alone, with Asian production leading the world. Thailand, now the largest producer, earns \$2 billion annually from its shrimping industry. America imports 88 percent of its \$4-billion shrimp purchases, and prices have dropped by 50 percent in the past ten years. Half of the shrimp production is farmed. Fishing nations have mastered shrimp farming so well that it now accounts for 50 percent of world production. The shrimp offered in restaurants and food stores today costs only a dollar a pound to produce.

But to create shrimp farms, it is necessary to remove mangroves. Mangroves once covered more than three-quarters of the world’s tropical coastline. Today, they cover less than 37 percent. Just 50 years ago, the shores along the rim of the Indian Ocean were ringed with endless acres of mangroves—swampy rainforests hugging the edges of both land and sea. Mangroves are storehouses of biodiversity, home to the world’s richest variety of salt-tolerant trees, ferns, and shrubs. Hundreds of different birds live in the mangroves, which also shelter migratory species. Mangroves are rich in sea life, including plankton, mollusks, and shell- and fin-fish. They are well-populated with crocodiles, monkeys, wild cats, lizards, and sea turtles.

As the region’s developing countries have expanded and diversified their economies, protective reefs, sand dunes, and mangroves along coastlines have been steadily removed. In the past few

decades, more than 30 percent of the world's mangrove forests, covering tens of thousands of miles of coastline, have been destroyed to make room for shrimp farms. Shrimp farming has resulted in beaches being cleared of mangroves and in an enormous rise of tourism, hotels, big cities, and other coastal developments.

On their way to their fishing boats early on the morning of December 26, 2004, fishermen noticed an odd absence of the usual wildlife found along their paths, but paid little attention to it. As they began trawling, there seemed to be an extraordinary abundance of fish: mackerel, squid, red snapper, sardines, and white snapper. They had never seen such profusion or diversity. In fact, yellow catfish, tiger fish, and other species not usually seen in these waters were, for the first time, remarkably abundant.

On that morning, fishermen long used to variable fishing conditions were giddy with excitement, hauling in their catch as fast as they could, convinced that their singular luck could not last for long.

During the previous three weeks, there had been a strange and total absence of fish, and the ocean had become unusually deep. And at this moment, very strangely, the tide seemed to be receding further and faster than they had ever seen before. Coral reefs appeared in only four meters of water where the sea was normally 20 meters deep. Something odd was happening. The tide was supposed to be coming in, but it was going out. Nobody on the beach was paying attention, but a kilometer of sand had replaced the space where normally there was sea. Fishing boats were sitting on wet sand.

In the distance, perhaps a kilometer away, a large wave could be seen—angular, black, and moving very, very fast. After the tsunami hit, 300,000 people died. In the ensuing chaos and destruction, one million jobs were lost in Indonesia and Sri Lanka alone.

Fewer casualties were experienced where mangrove forests remained, for example in Pichavaram and Muthupet in South India. Close to the epicenter of the tsunami, on Nias Island,

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Indonesia, people were protected by mangroves. Burma and the Maldives suffered less damage because their mangroves and coral reefs remained largely intact.

Sitting in the bistro, you might think that a shrimp cocktail, world shrimp prices, friends on vacation, unemployment, the silence of animals, mangroves, tsunamis, and death and destruction in twelve different countries were all separate events. But we are part of one universal web. All these parts are intimately, exquisitely, and invisibly connected—they are one.

What I have described above is far from being a complete review of all the possible impacts and outcomes of nations hungry for shrimp, and we may never even know or make the connections necessary to identify them all. But we can become more aware of the notion of oneness and live our lives in a way that recognizes the sacred connections between everything and considers the implications of all our actions on the whole.

When we lead from this place in our hearts, it shows.

Making Oneness Practical

America West flight attendants' union vice-president Bill Lehman credits CEO Doug Parker for the survival of the airline during an extraordinarily difficult time for the industry. "Had Doug not been in power in September 2001, we wouldn't be here today," said Lehman, who has been with America West for 16 years.

Parker serves meals to workers at Thanksgiving and Christmas and works on the ramp as a baggage handler. "You just don't see that," Lehman said. "It is really pretty impressive." America West pilots' union chairman, J. R. Baker, is equally impressed. Parker took time out from a Phoenix golf tournament to intervene in a case involving Baker's son, who has lymphoma, by personally persuading the insurance company to allow Baker's son back in the hospital after a relapse. "He is a good guy," Baker said of Parker.

Parker sees himself as one with—not separate from—his colleagues at all levels. And when he negotiates with unions, he is treated the same way—as one—which is why the company goes from strength to strength. Its customers, vendors, employees, communities, and regulators are all one. In 2005, America West merged with US Airways to become the world's largest low-fare airline.

Wherever we are, whatever we do, think, or feel, we are connected through sacred pathways to each other and to all that is—the reality of oneness. When we grow our awareness of this reality, we grow our capacity for conscious leadership.

Turning Away from Separateness

According to the Conference Board, 40 percent of employees feel disconnected from their companies, and two out of three do not identify or feel motivated to support their employer's business objectives. Some 25 percent are “just showing up to collect a paycheck.” In one mid-western university, a study showed that between 1988 and 2001, there was a dramatic increase in mental health problems reported by students. The numbers seeking help for depression doubled, and the number contemplating suicide tripled. The National Institute of Mental Health predicts that 13 percent of Americans (19 million) between the ages of 18 and 54 suffer from anxiety disorders and 9.5 percent from depressive disorders. The World Health Organization forecasts that by 2020, the share of “global disease burden” (the number of years of life lost to premature death or disability) will rise from 10.5 percent to 15 percent. The sadness and unhappiness of separation come with a heavy price.

In the past few years, we have become increasingly aware that separateness not only defies reality, it also brings about a sickness of the body—and worse, of the soul. Along with this, we have also become aware that the world is smaller, more interdependent, and

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integrated. As we will see, the desire for, and experience of, oneness is not new. However, there is today a new awareness being felt and heard across the world that calls us all to return to oneness. Community is growing in importance, and privacy has become history. The new reality—novel for some, and everyday experience for others—is that we are one.

We are connected in ways we did not see before. Anheuser-Busch, which uses Missouri-grown rice to make beer, became anxious when it heard about the plans of Ventria Biosciences to plant fields in Missouri with transgenic rice containing human genes. The additional genes cause the plant to produce two proteins which Ventria intends to use to treat stomach disorders. Anheuser-Busch realized that the transgenic plants and seeds could migrate to the food crops and, eventually, might modify their beer. When the company announced that it would boycott Missouri rice if Ventria proceeded, the biotech company decided to plant the rice elsewhere. Everything in our lives is connected. We are one.

- If we bulldoze suppliers to provide more services and higher quality at lower prices and, by doing so, eventually drive them out of business, we will both lose, because suppliers and customers are one.
- If we have a rancorous exchange with our spouse, it isn't just the other party who is hurt. We are both hurt because our relationship—our oneness—is strained. This damages our partnership and therefore both of us, along with our children and friends, our work, and our health and well-being.¹
- If I throw my soda can out of my car window while driving, I may think that the litter I have thrown on the road is no longer

1. A study published in the December 2005 issue of *Archives of General Psychiatry* suggests that spouses engaged in hostile relationships have consistently elevated stress levels that significantly impede their bodies' wound-healing capacity and raise blood levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines, which have been linked to a higher risk of developing depression, heart disease, osteoporosis, arthritis, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and general physical decline.

part of my world after I have moved on, but I would be wrong. If millions of others do the same, rivers will become polluted and my drinking water will be at risk. The Earth is not an open system—it is a closed system.

- If I cheat or steal from my employees, customers, or suppliers, I may think that I can get away with it, but this is a misconception, as we have learned from the malfeasance and downfall of too many corporate leaders.
- When we inspire a child to do something extraordinary, we change the world, because we are one.

In these, and many other examples cited in this book, there are always causes and effects. (These are the terms we use in the West, but the process is known as *karma* in the East.) There are never actions without consequences—anywhere—because we are one.

The depth of our self-deception, caused by our belief in, and commitment to, separateness—isolating and disconnecting aspects of our lives—has become breathtaking. Consider what happened when Bernie Ebbers, the disgraced, then 63-year-old former CEO of WorldCom, was sentenced to 25 years in jail for orchestrating an \$11-billion accounting fraud, the biggest in the nation's history. His lawyers asked for leniency on the basis of their client's largesse and support of charitable causes! This suggests a bizarre mind-trick that stealing with one hand and supporting charities with the other represent separate activities, even when carried out by the same person! We continue in this illusion when we hurt others while believing that we are not hurting ourselves. The truth is quite otherwise. When we hurt a customer, we hurt ourselves, because the customer becomes an ex-customer—and because we share the same world.

The illusion is that we are separate: that the gum someone stuck under their seat in the movie theater would become part of another's world after they left; that my anger, when transferred to you, becomes your problem, not mine; that my department—or even

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company—is separate from yours; that if I crush a competitor, it affects them, but not me. The illusion is that we are separate from one another, separate from our actions, separate from other regions, cultures, religions, companies, and beliefs. When we act as if we were separate—for example, when we deliver shoddy service to customers, or exploit employees—that act of separateness creates a bigger wave of separateness.

People are feeling increasingly separate from business today, and this is counterproductive for the corporate world. In almost every field, we are being subjected to the powerful awakening that there is no separateness, only oneness. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

The air that I breathe is essential for my existence—to exist, I must breathe. Therefore, I am one with the air, for when the air ceases, so do I. In the same way, the water and I are also one. And the water *and* the air—*and you and I*—are all one, for we all exist interdependently. Therefore, we, and everything around us, are one.

The wave is not separate from the ocean; the oxygen in water is not separate from the hydrogen; the wave is not separate from the particle; I am not separate from you. In fact, nothing is separate from anything. We are one.

Transparency Reveals Our Oneness

Corporations, governments, health care, education, law enforcement, charities, associations, and religious groups are under more intense scrutiny than ever before, operating with the growing awareness that they will be held accountable for their actions—that everything they do may, sooner or later, become subject to investigation, audit, and media surveillance. Privacy is history. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of the United States and the new European international capital standard, known as Basle II, are just two of

many new initiatives that are changing the game, requiring stringent new levels of openness and fair practice in corporate governance. Although Sarbanes-Oxley is American law, it applies to any organization from any country doing business in the United States.

On a trip to England, I was surprised to see a headline declaring, “Elliott Spitzer shakes up UK Insurance Industry”—this in reference to the probe into insurance industry practices by New York State’s Attorney General in his home state. Note that we are referring here to *one* elected government attorney from *one* U.S. state who has impacted the lives and businesses of thousands of people all over the world. This one man has effected lower mutual fund fees, changed the structure of Wall Street research, forced drug companies to open up their clinical trials to public scrutiny, and overhauled the relationship between insurance companies and brokers—worldwide.

Technology Makes Us One

Technology is just one of many forces teaching us the reality that we are all connected, guiding us, sometimes reluctantly, into the glare of transparency and fairness. We are interconnected and interdependent in ways that seem more obvious than ever before. And technology is accentuating the transparency by helping to reveal *and* empower these connections as never before. We are one.²

In 1992, when underdog Korean presidential candidate Roh Moo Hyun’s running mate, Chung Mong Joon, leader of the National Alliance 21 party, withdrew his support for Roh just seven hours before polls closed, things looked very bleak for the latter. Adding to his woes were the three leading newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo*,

2. Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) is an example of the growing oneness in software, which, even when they are written in different languages and have different purposes, can work together for a common goal.

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Joong-ang Ilbo, and *Dong-A Ilbo*, which were dismissing Roh as a dangerous leftist and declaring that he would be defeated. Early exit polls showed Roh trailing his opponent, Grand National Party leader Lee Hoi Chang, by a substantial margin.

Self-educated, Roh came from a poor family and in earlier years had been jailed for helping dissidents fight the military regimes of the past. In 1981, Roh defended a student who was arrested on trumped-up charges of anti-state activities, and much

I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do.

Helen Keller



of his subsequent work had been as a human rights lawyer defending pro-democracy and labor-rights activists. This endeared him to students and young voters. Admiring his courage, integrity, and reputation as an independent outsider, they formed an Internet fan club to promote his future. In time, this band of supporters grew to 70,000 members and helped launch what has been called the Roh typhoon. The Internet enabled Roh to liberate himself from “black money”—corporate donations that

are South Korea’s traditional form of campaign financing. Largely through Internet-based campaign groups, Roh raised the equivalent of about \$1 billion from more than 180,000 individual donors.

Thus it was that news of Roh’s impending electoral defeat quickly circulated among young voters via Internet bulletin boards and cell phones operated by digitally savvy student supporters. One Internet site recorded three million hits from around midnight to about 3 a.m. on Election Day—some five to six times the average. Hundreds of thousands of Roh’s young supporters made millions of cell phone calls, and 800,000 text messages flashed to the cell phones of their friends, urging them to go to the polls and vote for Roh.

By 2 p.m., another exit poll showed that Roh was leading Lee by 2 to 3 percent, and shortly after the polls closed, Roh was declared the winner.

Technology has become a remarkable gift, beyond others that we take so much for granted. It is a tool that, for the first time in history, has the power to wire the souls of the universe together—for good. The funeral of Princess Diana marked the first time in history when one story was shared with one billion people around the world simultaneously—on CNN.

Technology has raised the level of consciousness in the world by helping us to see how much we have in common, and causing us to understand that we are connected as one. Technology also offers the means to examine, endorse, or challenge the thoughts and actions of anyone on earth. A new age of relationships will flow from this—among members of society and between societies—based on the realization that we are all connected, that we are all part of one universal system.

Corporate leaders, government officials, church leaders, athletes, entertainers, even moms and dads, all are available for scrutiny. We have lost our separate, untouchable status. We have come to realize that we are all one and more similar to, than different from, one another. We are human, vulnerable, susceptible, brilliant, curious, and magnificent. We are capable of greatness and of making mistakes. We have learned that our idols who were portrayed in books and movies as charismatic leader prototypes are not, after all, immune to questioning, as issues pertaining to their business and personal ethics are openly discussed and disseminated more quickly and widely than ever before in the electronic, digital, and printed media. Not a single digit, or document, with our name on it is exempt from examination.

Since being formed in 2001, the phenomenal, self-organizing, Web-based free encyclopedia, Wikipedia, has become much larger than all existing encyclopedias, most of which were assembled and developed over far longer periods. It is a portent of how the Web attracts and embraces oneness—over half a million contributors offer articles and self-regulate the system, acting as one, and the average time it takes to detect, remove, or repair deliberate

attempts to sabotage Wikipedia's trust and integrity is 1.7 seconds!

Whatever we create, we create not just for our (imagined) separate selves, but for us all, because, of course, we are one, and technology helps to smooth the path to oneness.

The Emergence of the Conscious Leader

Why is there an emerging interest in conscious leadership? One of the reasons is that our expectations of leaders and leadership are changing as we become more aware of the shortcomings of separateness thinking and the imperative of oneness.

In the past, we have made organizational leaders our icons. We have separated them from us by putting them on pedestals, worshipping their personalities, and singing their praises as if they were heroic saviors. Countless leadership theories have passed like meteorites in the night sky of history, and now we are reassessing many of them, along with our opinions of corporate leaders, some of whom made their fame and were exalted for practices like firing the lowest-performing 10 percent of their sales teams each year. We yearn for something more than this—something more honoring of our oneness.

The people we fire are also our customers, our friends, and members of our communities. To celebrate a company that “succeeds” by firing people might seem okay to some when it is happening in other companies, but it feels different when it is your company doing the firing, and you are the one being fired. Companies that “succeed” by one set of measures, but fail by another, or “succeed” at the expense of another, are practicing an obsolete concept: separateness. Today, consumers want to wear sneakers that are stylish and inexpensive, *and* they want the employees who make them to be fairly compensated for their work. These are signals that a new maturity is emerging, based on greater consciousness. We are realizing that we should help and support those who are

confused, disadvantaged, or underperforming, instead of yelling at them or firing them—or demanding, rather than inspiring, higher performance. This represents a priceless strategic opportunity for those who are conscious, and a wake-up call for those who are not.

Countless organizations from Nike to McDonald's to Starbucks have transformed their policies in response to this new awareness. Starbucks, for example, through its supply chain member, Mississippi River Corporation, received first-ever approval from the Food and Drug Administration to incorporate 10 percent post-consumer fiber into its hot-beverage paper cups. The new cups reduce the company's use of tree fiber by more than five million pounds annually.

That is not to say that this shift in consciousness is going to be perfectly smooth or lead to immediate and successful transformation. We've been drawing our models of leadership from history, casting leadership in terms of heroes and miracle workers. In doing so, we have created a "cult of the personality." This can be seen everywhere, in the world of business, in sports, in entertainment. The relationship we have with those magnified personalities is based on dependency, power, and separateness. We have created our modern form of serfs and peasants. We should remind ourselves that history is full of examples of people who "buckled under" these types of leaders. Think of Genghis Khan, Mussolini, or Hitler, or any despotic, pathological leader. The human condition is malleable and vulnerable to the urgings of a Pol Pot, an Idi Amin, a Mao Tse-tung, or a Stalin. The direction humans take can easily be swayed by potent leaders if the relationship with their followers is rooted in separateness—the mistaken belief that the consequences of my actions are separate from me and are not now, and will not become, my problem. Like all radical changes, the move away from this thinking to models of conscious leadership based on oneness will be challenging.

In her research, Bernice Kanner, author of *Are You Normal About Money?* (Bloomberg Press, 2001), found that for \$10 million,

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25 percent of those surveyed would abandon all their friends and church or become a prostitute for a week, or change their race or sex. And 7 percent (this seems so incredible—one out of every 14 of us) would commit murder for this amount. But the margins between corruption and virtue are narrow. Most people surveyed said they would do these things for as little as \$3 million, but definitely not for \$2 million. Go figure! In our rational, material times, it seems we have our principles—attached to a certain price. This may also suggest something else, however: that although we inherently understand the principle of oneness, at the mundane levels we are prepared to act separately, until the going gets dangerous, when we instinctively resort to oneness again, because deep in our hearts, we *know* we need one another.

Throughout history, there have been numerous opportunities for leaders, through their personality and their demagoguery, to create armies of followers who would do all kinds of reprehensible things at their urging. This has been the dynamic of the ego-driven leadership style during the past thousand years. But it worked better (if “better” is an appropriate word here) in an era before our networks were democratized.

We are learning that the fear-based, egocentric leadership model—the leader as hero or charismatic personality—is ineffective. The results it produces are not consistent. As our societies move from a worldview based on separateness to one based on oneness, achieving results by fear-based measures is bound to be temporary. Parents who bribe and punish their children to achieve results; spouses who withhold emotional gifts from each other to control their relationship; politicians who make promises to secure votes; priests who guarantee salvation in exchange for doctrinal adherence; or companies that over-promise to make a sale—all rely on fear-based manipulations that will prove to be transitory and uninspiring because they are rooted in the illusion of separateness. They are trying to control and win, instead of connecting

and cooperating, which creates oneness.

Today, we are tired of the “rational” ten-point plan for leadership that purports to provide a guaranteed outcome. Our ways of thinking in the post-9/11 era are very different. We are engaging leaders and programs in a much higher level of questioning. Today, we’re looking at each other and asking, “Who are you really? What do you stand for and what values do you represent? What are the deeper and wider implications of your behavior? In what way have my actions contributed to your behavior? Are you more connected to the whole than to your ego?” We are looking for conscious leaders and teachers who are not merely doing what they can get away with, but who are loving and respectful of others and have a deep commitment to values and to living an inspiring life that is sensitive to everything and everyone. We’re asking questions that attempt to move us towards a deeper sense of oneness.

And the inspiring bonus that flows to us all from this new thinking is the growing awareness of the good in people and their potential to contribute to greater oneness.

5




CASTLE

COURAGE

A TRAVELER TOOK HER faithful pet dachshund, Wienie, on an African photo safari. One day, walking at the forest's edge, Wienie was fascinated by some butterflies, which he began to chase. Before long, he was first distracted, and then lost.

Act boldly and
unseen forces will
come to your aid.

Dorothea Brande



While searching for a way out of the jungle, Wienie noticed a leopard slinking menacingly in his direction, looking very much like he had found lunch. Wienie thought to himself, "Oh! Oh! This is not good!"

Noticing some bones lying on the ground nearby, Wienie immediately settled down to chew on them, with his back to the approaching cat. Just before the leopard pounced on him, the dachshund exclaimed loudly, "Boy, that was one delicious leopard. I wonder if there are any more around here?"

Hearing this, the leopard stopped in his tracks. Reconsidering his intended attack, he slunk quietly into the trees, his heart pounding.

"Whew," said the leopard. "That was close. That dachshund nearly had me."

Meanwhile, a cunning monkey observing this drama from a perch in a nearby tree decided that he could put the dachshund's trickery to good use. The monkey raced off to make a deal with

the leopard, but Wienie noticed his speedy departure and suspected this might lead to more trouble.

The monkey caught up with the leopard, explaining breathlessly what he had seen and struck a deal for himself with the leopard. The leopard, furious at being duped, growled, “Here, monkey, hop on my back and let’s go and pay a visit to that conniving canine.”

Meanwhile, Wienie was trying to find a path out of the jungle, when he noticed the leopard approaching again, this time with the monkey on his back. Wienie thought, “Oh! Oh! What am I going to do now?”

Realizing that escape was really not possible, he sat down with his back to the approaching marauders, pretending that he hadn’t noticed them. As soon as they were both within earshot, he said, “Where is that monkey? I sent him off over an hour ago to bring me another leopard.”

As Emerson said, “What a new face courage puts on everything!”

Courage Is the Beginning of All Greatness

The first step required for any bold action or idea is courage, because without it, nothing else can happen, especially not anything new, daring, different, contrary, challenging, or innovative. It takes courage to be a ten-percenter.

It takes courage to have an independent thought—to get out of our boxes, our paradigms. It takes courage to become open to new thinking and to be accepting of ideas that do not currently align with our own. It takes courage to be willing to consider that the world could be larger than we imagine it to be, to consider that we are all part of an interdependent whole that does not end

Daring ideas are like chess men moved forward.

They may be beaten, but they may start a winning game.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



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with us, with our family, with the company we work for, or even with a border between nations. It takes courage to embrace a new awareness that every action we take affects the whole.

It takes courage to come up with a new idea and state it, pioneer it, and implement it. It takes courage to say—in an inspiring way, of course—that we disagree with a decision, a policy, or a strategy. The failure of hundreds of companies could have been averted with a few courageous words that questioned, challenged, opposed, or proposed an alternative to the status quo or the consensus of the herd. We show courage when we introduce a new way of doing anything: a new way of running a company; a new way of leading; a new way of conducting a meeting; a new way of running advertising campaigns; a new way of hiring and selecting people; a new way of retaining or paying them; a new way to lead a country.

It is a blessed thing that in every age someone has had enough individuality and courage to stand by his own convictions.

Robert G. Ingersoll

It takes courage to speak out, to challenge conformity and tradition; to go first and weather the attacks, ridicule, and criticisms of others; to be different. It takes courage to be free, to claim our voice, to own our power, to let the world hear the music inside us.

It takes courage to realize that we are in a rut and that we need to break away from the pack and stride in a new, inspiring, and energizing direction.

It takes a courageous leader to realize that the success of his or her company can't stand on its own because, if one company fails due to the success of another, the marketplace suffers a loss and becomes less as a result—because we are one. Who wins in such a situation? Who wins when we end up in a monopoly because we've knocked everyone else out of business? In the end, this is bullying, the act of a coward, and this sort of success does not benefit us, because it hurts the whole.

How We Lose Our Courage: The Need for Love and Approval

Why is true courage so hard to find? We are all born with ample courage and almost no fear, but as our lives progress, the ratios reverse. As infants, whatever we want, we cry for, without fear of consequences. We are courageous because we are one with the world—no separation exists in our minds or hearts to make us afraid. Little by little, though, we trade our courage and our wholeness for approval.

The greatest of all human needs is for love and approval. If we choose not to conform to the needs of someone who threatens us by withholding their love and approval, we are faced with a choice: to maintain our courage and personal power, or to lose it. Like Tweedledum in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, who observed, "I am very brave generally, only today I happen to have a headache," the loss of our courage leads to the loss of our personal power.

It starts in small, insidious ways. As children, we quickly learn induced responses: the required behavior that will please those upon whom we depend who threaten to withdraw nourishment, comfort, or affection as "punishment" unless certain ways of behavior are forthcoming. This is how we are "trained," how we are raised, and before long, this becomes the auto-response hard-wired into our brains. The English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1896–1971) wrote about the accrued potential harm to developing children when compliance is enforced. In his book *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (International Universities Press, 1965), he says, "Compliance brings immediate rewards, and adults only too easily mistake compliance for growth."

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.

Ambrose Redmoon



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Winnicott felt that compliance promotes the development of a “false self” because the “true self” is not allowed to flourish. Induced responses at the preverbal stage, according to Winnicott, would preclude the emergence of the child’s “spontaneous gesture.” Ultimately, we transfer what we have learned—avoiding spontaneity—into the rest of our lives, including school, religion, relationships, work, and politics. Lacking the courage to be spontaneous, we begin to live inauthentic lives. Through this conditioning, which, ironically, is spurred by our hunger for oneness, we slowly but systematically lose our courage. Yet, because this happens so gradually, we remain largely unaware of the loss and the separation from our oneness with the world. By now it feels so familiar, and it elicits the approval we yearn for.

If someone suggested that we lacked courage, most of us would disagree. We are convinced that we respond courageously to most of life’s situations. But if we look more closely at different areas of our lives—how we communicate; how we relate; how we exchange information; what we wear; what we think; what we say; even how we vote—we can see that these are all areas where we may not always be our authentic selves because of our lack of courage. And when we begin to think about these decision areas of our lives, it becomes clear that there are many moments when we trade wholeness for approval.

In her book *Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential* (Harmony, 2002), Caroline Myss writes, “When you do not seek or need external approval, you are at your most powerful. Nobody can disempower you emotionally or psychologically... You cannot live for prolonged periods of time within the polarity of being true to yourself and needing the approval of others.”

When we lack courage, we separate ourselves from our values and beliefs, acting in ways that are incongruent with our feelings. Thus, we become disconnected from our sense of wholeness—our personal oneness. Letting go of the constant craving for approval is one of the essential first steps for reclaiming our courage and,

therefore, the sense of personal oneness that is so vital to our fulfillment and inspiration.

Courage and the Need to Tame Our Egos

It takes courage to accept and embrace concepts that, at first blush, may feel counterintuitive because they may not be a part of our current, accumulated awareness. If this were not so, then dysfunctional behavior would not exist. We would always meet the needs of employees and customers, marriages would last forever, and there would be peace on earth. Or, as Dorothy Parker facetiously said,

*Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
A medley of extemporanea;
And love is a thing that can never go wrong;
And I am Marie of Romania.*

It takes courage to take action based on an idea or concept that does not seem to fit comfortably within our existing worldview. The courage to accept that things, ideas, and people with whom we disagree or who challenge our egos are so often the teachers we need. As the Dalai Lama has said, “Our greatest teachers are our enemies.” If we look at each challenge as an opportunity to learn and grow, then we can reframe our relationships, ideas, and actions and reactions—and this takes courage.

Speak your mind,
even if your
voice shakes.
Maggie Kuhn

I have one of the best occupations imaginable. I work with wonderful, interesting, and brilliant people who genuinely love their work and live the principles of oneness as they inspire and change the world. And yet in my work, I’m constantly faced with the need for courage. I am a veritable lamppost against which many critics raise their legs. I’ve been

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Failure is unimportant. It takes courage to make a fool of yourself.

Charlie Chaplin



challenged every which way by all kinds of people at various stages of my work, and I've been ridiculed for proposing theories of leadership based on courage, authenticity, service, truth, love, and effectiveness. It takes courage, especially in a corporate setting, to stand up and say that if we understood the nature of oneness, loved each other, told the truth, and embraced myth, mystery, and magic, then we would create a more inspiring world. It takes courage because I am also aware that there are many people who depend on me for employment and corporate and personal success, and that if I fail, I am, in some measure, possibly failing them.

So, I need courage to be authentic, to always be who I really am, and to say what I really believe, while also being open to possibilities and ideas other than those that engage my passion. This is where it all begins: finding the courage to break out of the paradigm and the patterns, to say to a board of directors (as a client of mine so courageously did): "I know you want these numbers met by the next quarter, but, quite honestly, I can't do that, because it will hurt people, and we must first honor the human spirit and then the bottom line. So, please give me more time" (which they did because the board was so impressed with the passion and courage of this CEO).

Don't be afraid to go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is.

Anonymous



Recently, I was working closely with a group of 30 CEOs from a large organization. I was guiding them in how to build an inspiring corporate culture by communicating from their souls to the souls of their employees, vendors, and customers. After I had finished presenting my thoughts, one of them, dismissing my ideas out of hand, turned to me and let loose a vituperative volley of criticism wrapped in sarcasm and personal denigration. Having fully ventilated his views, he sat down.

Floored and wounded, I took some deep breaths. The future of my relationship with this company rested on this moment. But so did the future of *their* company. They had an opportunity to grow and become brilliant and inspiring, or to stay stuck in mediocrity, demoralizing leadership, and financial failure. I looked at my intimidator. Thirty faces turned to me, and the air was still as everyone stopped breathing.

“Tom,” I said quietly, “I appreciate what you are trying to say, but I wonder if you could say it again in a way that is inspiring?”

Deafening silence. Slowly, everyone let out their breath. A successful teaching moment had occurred in which we had learned something together about courage, communication, and inspiration. This organization has since become one of our most successful clients and gained a national reputation as a brilliant turnaround case study—and Tom has become my skiing buddy.

Courage is a noble quality that leads to growth and authenticity, and it usually leads to something greater than the mere satisfaction of our fear-based egos. Tim Berners-Lee might have been the richest person in the world today if he had been a coward. In 1980, while working at Cern, the European Organization for Research near Geneva, he became frustrated with the difficulty of tracking the projects and the many computers used to analyze scientific experiments. He developed a system for extending virtual memory links, initially between the 5,000 researchers, but eventually to any computer anywhere. In part, this breakthrough ultimately became the World Wide Web.

Wherever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.

Peter F. Drucker

Cowardice asks the question—is it safe? Expediency asks the question—is it politic? Vanity asks the question—is it popular? But conscience asks the question—is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because it is right.

Martin Luther King Jr.

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In 1990, at the age of 35, Berners-Lee chose not to patent his Web software because he was concerned that a Web based on proprietary software could lead to multiple competing Webs owned by large corporations: digital silos of Babel instead of the fluid, seamless system that exists today. He had the courage to listen to his conscience and act responsibly, changing the world by connecting everyone with a computer to everyone else with one, rather than creating a personal fortune. With great courage, he chose to honor oneness, rather than the separate parts, which might have been more expedient and self-serving, but far less fulfilling.⁷

Being Courageous, More Than Talking About It

Courage is important in every aspect of our lives: at work, at school, with our children, in our relationships, as coaches and mentors, in politics. This is where great leadership starts, both in organizational settings and in personal and home environments.

Organizational leadership can't be separated from the rest of life—it is one. There is no “organizational leadership,” there is just *leadership*, the best of which is conscious and inspiring and is sourced from the passionate awareness of being one with those whom we lead.

Sorious Samura grew up as one of nine children in a poor family in Freetown, Sierra Leone. While attending an English-speaking Christian school, he learned that drama was an effective method of communicating messages about the political plight of his country. When he was working as an assistant theater manager in the late 1980s, he found a digital video camera and taught

7. Tim Berners-Lee now holds the 3Com Founders chair at the Laboratory for Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Lab (CSAIL) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He directs the World Wide Web Consortium, an open forum of companies and organizations with the mission to lead the Web to its full potential.

himself to use it, becoming a researcher for Cine Africa. With professional crews from abroad, he later worked on three documentary films for UNICEF Freetown and produced the ten-minute documentary *Giving Them a Chance*.

In 1999, he was filming the rebels who had invaded Freetown, when he was captured, punished, and let off with the warning that if he was caught filming the rebels again, they would kill him. The soldiers threatened to cut out his heart and eat it. Samura, now an acclaimed documentary filmmaker living in London, said, "And they would do it."

Samura was lucky, for few survive capture by the rebels, and none without mementos of scars or loss of limb. Courageously, he immediately returned to the streets, hiding behind windows, dodging sniper fire, filming people dying in flaming buildings, terrified crowds, the tragedy of the torture of a 14-year-old boy, victims blasted by bullets in the crossfire, and fighters having their stomachs or heads shredded by high-velocity bullets. His footage was so disturbing that he was unable to watch it himself back home. Despite the difficulty of being a witness to such horror and pain, he continued to film, keeping his camera hidden, while always trying to keep it steady.

Samura's debut film, *Out of Africa (Cry Freetown)*, a harrowing account of the victims of civil war in his country, won a prestigious Rory Peck Award. At the awards ceremony, Samura said, "You guys are clapping me for showing you pictures of my people killing each other. But where were you? Why didn't you go there? I didn't put my life on the line for an award or money. Take your award back if you want to, but go there, go to Sierra Leone."

He received a standing ovation.

How many business or organizational meetings have we suffered through where we have

Trust that still, small voice that says, "This might work and I'll try it."

Diane Mariechild

Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.

Aristotle

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asked under our breath, “Where were you? Why didn’t you go there?” How many times have you wondered, “Where were you? Why didn’t you go there?”

Courage is the capacity to confirm what can be imagined.

Leo Rosten

Because we so often associate courage with bravery in combat and similar situations, we don’t easily recognize the subtler, deeper forms of courage: not the courage that arises from a need to prove one’s strength and victory over others, but the courage that enables us to be authentic and truthful, reveal or expose our vulnerability or admit our mistakes, or introduce a novel idea that might be ridiculed at first—even the courage, sometimes, just to say “sorry.”

Charles Swindoll has written, “Courage is not limited to the battlefield or the Indianapolis 500 or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much quieter. They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody’s looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you are misunderstood.”

Reclaiming Our Lost Courage: Learning Not to Judge

We have no need to *find* courage. It is already within all of us. We simply need to reclaim it.

How can we once again become courageous? How do we find the courage to tell someone what we are really feeling? To tell them the truth? To be authentic with them? To serve them and honor others? To love them? To be truly effective in our relationships with them and in the rest of our lives? In other words, how do we find the courage to live the CASTLE Principles?

Even romantic love calls on us to be courageous, to open our hearts to another and to let them glimpse the secrets of our soul.

Sometimes, we are stretched to draw on our courage to look past our preconceptions and judgments.

Adele Azar-Rucquoi never imagined that she would find her Prince Charming among the homeless and penniless. At 59, after searching far and wide for the man of her dreams, she was close to abandoning her quest.

Then fate stepped in, as it often does—a call from her close friend Lynn changed her life forever.

“Adele, I met a man who reads Thomas Merton,” she said. “His name is Jim. I want you to meet him.”

Adele had passionately read everything the poet-monk ever wrote. Merton’s down-to-earth pathway to God had shaped her soul, and he had said, “The biggest human temptation is to settle for too little.” But there was a catch, Lynn said. Jim had no roof over his head, and had been living on the streets of Orlando for more than a year. He had no home and no money. That made him an impossible candidate for Adele, who had struggled with money issues for most of her life.

In her youth, Adele had rebelled against her immigrant father’s obsession with money, which he proudly earned through thrift and hard work, first building his own grocery store, and later acquiring Florida real estate. After graduating from college, Adele felt called to devote her life more fully to God, converting to Catholicism and escaping the issues of money by taking the vows of poverty as a nun. Sixteen years later, she left the convent and soon found herself holding down three jobs at once to meet her material needs, and it was not lost on her that she was now following the same patterns that she had earlier criticized in her father. When he passed away several years later, Adele was left with a substantial inheritance. The money she had cursed was now hers.

We have what we seek, it is there all the time, and if we give it time, it will make itself known to us.

Thomas Merton

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Now she was a wealthy woman. Why would she want to meet a homeless man, even if he did love Merton?

But her friend Lynn, who was highly intuitive and could look into a person's heart and soul without passing judgment, saw not Jim the homeless vagabond, but Jim the scholar, the poet, the philosopher—and the perfect match for Adele.

Reluctantly, Adele agreed to the breakfast meeting arranged by Lynn. Seated in the restaurant, she nervously sipped her coffee, waiting for Jim and preparing for the worst.

Don't judge a book
by its cover 'til
you've read
the book.

Jamie Lee Curtis



Would he be in rags? Would he smell? Would he be abrasive? As she saw Lynn approaching from a distance, a tall, lanky man at her side, her fears were allayed. Jim had smoothly trimmed hair, the color of wheat, a handsome beard, and honest, blue eyes. He looked like a good-natured, absent-minded professor. Gallantly, Jim shook Adele's hand and helped the two women with their chairs. He didn't grovel or appear nervous. Instead, he chatted effortlessly about his new laptop computer. Adele marveled—a man on the street owning a laptop! It was a very strange start for a woman of means and a man of no means. Adele tried not to stare. Over bacon and eggs, she felt her composure returning.

There was no denying the attraction she felt for Jim. She was fascinated by every gesture he made and every word he spoke. What history, she wondered, lay behind those eyes and that easy smile? What had happened to this man that had caused him to fall so low? Why had he chosen this vagabond existence?

Although the conversation flowed easily, these unspoken questions created an indisputable awkwardness between them. Lynn sensed this and, as the meeting drew to a close, played match-maker again: "I hope we'll catch you at the next Merton meeting. In fact, don't worry about a way to get there—we'll pick you up," she said breezily to Jim. "That would be great," he answered, glancing at Adele.

They met twice more—first at the Merton meeting, and later at a picnic lunch to which Jim had invited her. Adele had reluctantly accepted the invitation, wondering how Jim would find the means to provide a meal. On the day of the picnic, she hesitatingly drove her car to the agreed location, but then decided to park it blocks away and walk the rest of the distance to meet Jim. The idea of pulling up in a Cadillac to greet her homeless beau seemed inappropriate.

“So, where’s your car?” was the first question Jim asked. “I didn’t bring it,” Adele lied, lacking the courage to be truthful.

Being homeless did nothing to impair Jim’s hosting skills. He served sandwiches, chips, cold drinks, and even a Mrs. Paul’s cookie for dessert. He impressed Adele with his ease and resourcefulness. But their conversation soon turned to a sobering topic: Jim had chosen the occasion to openly reveal his past to Adele, answering the questions that had haunted her ever since their first meeting. Jim’s story, Adele discovered, was more complex and painful than she could ever have imagined.

Deep inside, Jim’s true, unrequited calling was to be an artist and a poet, but he suppressed these gifts every day, struggling to be what he was not—a success in the world of business. He had married young and found himself faced early with the need to support his wife and two children, and he therefore did what was required of him to ensure economic survival for his family. But after several years on this inauthentic path, he felt he had sunk into dark shadows, and experienced a deep sense of personal failure. His marriage fell apart.

“We broke up after 20 years,” Jim told Adele, “and I headed for Key West on an extended tour of duty for the U.S. Navy Reserve. Then, after that Navy assignment, my life really took off.” He shared with Adele how he had immersed himself into his writing and poetry, responding, at last, to his long repressed muse. Soon,

A man knows when he has found his vocation when he stops thinking about how to live and begins to live.

Thomas Merton



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he met and married a similarly Bohemian free spirit. But, as the days passed, Jim descended into a personal mental hell. He sought the guidance of a therapist, who advised him, “Jim, having left home, family, and everything else familiar, your stress level is off the charts.”

The therapist proved right. Within a short time, Jim suffered a complete mental and emotional breakdown that led to his taking the life of his new wife. Jim was judged by three court psychiatrists to be insane at the time of his crime, and he pleaded to the lesser charge of second-degree murder. Following seven years of incarceration in Florida prisons, he was released on probation. When Lynn introduced him to Adele, Jim was living on the streets of Orlando and savoring his new freedom.

Adele sat astounded, taking in Jim’s story. Although she found it extremely unsettling, she felt a calm come over her which she could only explain as grace from above. Now she knew his traumatic past—all of it. She soon realized that she would need to quickly decide whether or not she wanted to continue this relationship. She agonized over the undeniable attraction she felt for him, but ultimately concluded that there couldn’t possibly be a future for her in a relationship with a homeless man who had such a troubled past.

When Jim called her to arrange another meeting, she told him, “I’m not seeing you again,” immediately sensing Jim’s hurt in the silence and his long sigh. Then he answered, “Okay—if that’s what you want.”

In the weeks that followed, Adele was haunted by thoughts of Jim and a string of synchronicities that opened a deeper awareness of him in her. She realized that it was unfair to judge him on the basis of his setbacks and tragic experiences alone, or because he had shed all his material possessions. Jim’s circumstances, Adele was beginning to understand, were a spiritual passage through which he had retained his deep inner dignity, which existed independently of external conditions. She wrote him a note and sent it to the box number he had given her.

When he called her in response, he excitedly shared with her the news that he was now living with a Catholic family who attended the same church as he did—they had invited him to stay in their home in an extra bedroom. The family's trust in Jim sealed Adele's own destiny.

"Come over to Sunday-evening mass with us," Jim cheerily invited her.

A simple courtship followed, and within a couple of weeks, Adele realized that she was closer to Jim than she had ever been to any other person in her life. They were married on December 10, 1993, the anniversary of Merton's entry into the monastery at Gethsemane and his death in Bangkok 25 years later.

When we act courageously, we invite miraculous events and amazing synchronicities to enter into our lives. As Adele honored her inner courage and followed her heart by marrying Jim, she set the stage for such a miracle: Within four years, Jim discovered that he had accumulated a sizeable teacher's annuity—earned but forgotten. This, and his art, made Jim a significant contributor to the couple's finances.

The important lessons in courage—among them being brave enough to consider options beyond one's own prejudices—that Adele Azar-Rucquoi learned from meeting Jim and her eventual marriage to him, inspired her to write *Money As Sacrament: Finding the Sacred in Money* (Celestial Arts, 2002), a book for women who seek to end financial struggles and establish a peaceful relationship with money.

All these years later, their marriage is flourishing and their commitment to each other remains strong. Jim is fully engaged in life again. His self-esteem has also been nourished by successful

The power of genuine love is so deep and so strong that it cannot be deflected from its true aim even by the silliest of wrong ideas. When love is alive and mature in a person, it does not matter if he has a false idea of himself and of life: love will guide him according to its own inner truth and will correct his ideas in spite of him.

Thomas Merton



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exhibits of his art that have won the acclaim of judges and remuneration from patrons.

“Growing old with Jim is pure joy,” says Adele. “I made the right choice in marrying him.”

I invited Jim to write a poem for this book, and he responded:

*Adele has her courage taking me on with all that baggage.
Which is my own part in this miracle of us, I wonder?
Where's the Jim once visited then abandoned by such a muse,
Spent and undeserving?
That I escaped paying with my life for the one I took,
That God, the state, then Adele conspire in this rebirth's
hard to ignore:
Something more must be required! Love isn't finished with me.
More than ever—I must create!*

Adele's courage and her deep love for Jim enabled her to look through the facades of material possessions and past acquired social reference points to see his authenticity. She found her prayers for a life companion answered, but this gift could only be gained with courage—the courage to recognize and accept the blessing that, based on first impressions, appeared to be very different from what she had envisaged.

Just as remarkable are the courage that both Jim and Adele have demonstrated and the strength of their bond that has enabled them to openly tell their story for the first time by agreeing to let me write about it in this book. They have done so in the knowledge that in every tragic personal journey, there are lessons to be learned and passed on, and in this case, the lessons are about being courageous, forgiving, and loving. Their courage is an example to us all, and sharing it so bravely inspires positive transformation in their own lives and those of others.

Courage Has Its Rewards

Courage has its own rewards, and very often they are high. In fact, there might be a universal law at play here: “The amount of inspiration and mastery gained is directly related to the amount of courage invested.”

I am a passionate skier. I ski with very good skiers because they stretch me—and sometimes they scare me. But they always love me, so I trust them. I have to gather up my courage when they urge me to ski off a 60-degree precipice, but when I have done it once and survived, and then done it again without the fear, this is one of the great joys in my life. Loving, empathetic teachers, coaches, and leaders call on us to expand our courage. When we do, we grow, and we are inspired and therefore inspire.

The bravest thing
you can do when
you are not brave is
to profess courage
and act accordingly.

Corra Harris

Courage, then, is the place where change begins. As Katharine Butler Hathaway wrote, “If you let fear of consequence prevent you from following your deepest instinct, then your life will be safe, expedient and thin.” Courage is the first requirement to start a new life, enter a new relationship, inspire rather than fire an employee, lose weight, kick a habit, tell the truth, or be authentic—the next of the CASTLE Principles.

Practicing Oneness by Reclaiming Our Courage

It is so easy for us to say we should be more courageous. But it is far less easy to *be* more courageous. If this were not so, then life would be so much more straightforward. So, how can we grow our courage muscles?

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- By accepting responsibility for our actions, knowing that it is up to us, not some mysterious, vague “them.” Are you accepting the responsibility for being courageous? Do you hold others accountable for being courageous?
- By referencing our conscience, using it as a litmus test for what is right. Not what will get us into the least amount of trouble or be the least injury to our ego, but what is true for you in this moment. A *Fast Company* survey of readers, published on the Internet, showed that 73 percent said that responsibility and conscience are the most important conditions of courage at work, followed by love (11 percent), sacrifice (7 percent) and fear (7 percent). What is right for you now?
- By talking less about courage and acting with courage more, first with ourselves, and then with others. This will bring about a growing comfort with being courageous. Are you requiring yourself to practice the same level of courage that you expect of others?
- By remembering that courage comes from passion. If we are disengaged from life, we will have no passion for it and therefore we will be unable to draw on and use our reserves of courage. Finding the people and a cause that engage our passion will fuel our courage. When we feel intensely passionate about people, work, nature, ideas, or causes, we hardly notice the need to be courageous. In fact, there is simply no question about it: we *will* be courageous. Are you stoking the fires of your passion for life?
- By creating an environment for ourselves that is safer and therefore requires less energy to be invested in courage. Sometimes, we need courage simply because we are afraid. If we honor courage (in ourselves as well as others) we will foster the environment in which people are inspired and encouraged to be truthful and authentic. Are you inviting yourself and others to create safer environments by not being intimidating, angry, threatening, hostile, aggressive, selfish, dangerous, or political

and inauthentic, so that there is less need to use courage for the inconsequential, saving it for nobler purposes?

- We get what we expect, so we get a lot of cowardice, especially in organizations. Are you rewarding acts of courage, thus inviting more of them? Do your corporate and familial codes reward courage and therefore inspire you and others to step up and be brave?

BOTTOM LINE



Why do we need Courage?

Because every important transformation begins with Courage; therefore, it is the first step towards oneness.

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REFLECTIONS TO INSPIRE GROWTH IN COURAGE

*Describe one of the most Courageous moments in your life—
a time when you were at your personal, Courageous best:*

*Describe a current situation in your life that, in your heart, you
know could be enhanced through practicing greater Courage. It
is within you already, so how would you apply the same level of
Courage, described in your own example above, to this current
situation?*

*Do the thing you are afraid to do
and the death of fear is certain.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson