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Personal Excellence

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The Magazine of Personal Leadership

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Personal Excellence

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The Magazine of Life Leadership

INSPIRATIONAL • COURAGE

Exercise Courage

You will benefit in 12 ways.

by Sandra Ford Walston

COURAGE IS 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 your true identity, you begin to recognize your innate courage as well as the ego's insidious control mechanisms, which capitalize on fear and insecurity. As you recognize the fears that the ego uses to justify its self-importance, you undermine the ego's power to dominate your life and begin to manifest your true identity. You discover the personal truth within your 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 times when you allow fearful insecurities to undermine the courageous choice. Recognizing regrets, you can cultivate courage and 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 blame, but you will diminish the tendencies that keep you stuck in fear. Fear blocks and paralyzes the heart; therefore, fear blocks courage. Slowing down puts you in touch with reality—your own issues—releasing you from inner tyranny of fear-based habits and scripts, uncovering a deep set of self-actuating principles. In *The Gift of Change*, Marianne Williamson writes: "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. Any choice that moves you beyond words and thoughts and into the inner silence of the heart enables 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 man-made creation—

just like slavery, apartheid, and poverty. The dualistic concept of *fear versus courage* keeps you stuck within the mental limitations of ego. When you claim your courage, you begin to experience the heart and spirit truth that transcends the duality of the mind. In recognizing transcendent truth, you 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 your heart. This is the experience of "dying to self."

As courage consciousness matures in your life, you'll 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 attach-



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Your Whole Brain

Cultivate the creative right side.



by John Townsend

HAVE YOU EVER HAD THE experience of interviewing someone for a position and not listen to yourself? The individual looks good in all the objective metrics—resume, core competencies, recommendations, intelligence—and so there’s no real reason to have any hesitation about hiring him. Except something inside you is guarded or reserved. The person *simply doesn’t seem right*. However, you override the internal voice and go ahead with the hire. Within a few weeks or months, you discover what you were telling yourself that you were ignoring: the individual has some character problem, or is irresponsible, causes team and culture problems, and the like. The override was a mistake.

This incident illustrates a point: it is important for you to pay attention to the other side of your brain—the *right side*. You likely have extensive training and experience in analytic functions: judgment, observation, decision-making, and evaluation of data and trends—using the left side of the brain. The right side of your mind has to do with more subjective processing of information.

In these difficult times, you need to develop yourself as a productive asset to the highest degree that you can. Reality, whether it be financial or emotional, is reality. Reality reigns. Your best scenario is when the objective and the subjective agree, then you come close to what is real and actual. The more you are able to lead others from *both sides*, the more equipped you are to succeed.

Here are the subjective abilities you can develop, and how to do that.

Intuition. Intuition is knowing without knowing how you know. Intuition is your “gut response.” Science is still discovering the breakdowns of intuition, but somehow the mind is able to instantly process information and come to a conclusion which has a very high hit rate. The most successful and high-caliber leaders listen to their intuition

about a person or a situation at least as much as, or even more than, they do their objective abilities.

So how can you develop your intuition? I have two suggestions. First, intuition seems to be correlated with experience. That is, a radiologist will make a diagnosis on an x-ray of your leg bone in an instant because he has looked at thousands of x-rays. The better you know something, the better you train the intuition. So be a person who intentionally drills down on core competencies and expertise. Be a leader who can not only lead, but also has a deep skill set. Secondly, take time to listen to yourself when you are thinking about a situation. Ask yourself, not only *what do I think?* But *what is my gut telling me?* Simply giving yourself that attention and permission will help you pay attention to what is important.

Emotional attunement. Highly validated these days, the ability to understand what you are feeling is vital for the leader. Emotions have a primary role or function for us. They serve as a signal about something going on that we need to pay attention to. In the same way that the warning light on your car’s dashboard tells you that your oil levels are low, emotions alert you about something significant.



Anxiety, for example, is telling you that something potentially dangerous is ahead. You may need to avoid it, but you must not ignore it. For example, I was on a board that was facing a large financial commitment for the organization. The numbers looked promising, but a couple of the members said, “I’m anxious about this, beyond my normal anxiety.” They weren’t afraid to be afraid. Their concern caused the rest of us to be more careful in our due diligence. Ultimately, we walked away from the deal, and it proved to be the right decision.

Another key emotion is anger. When you are frustrated or angry, often you need to face and solve a problem. Your anger gives you the energy to have courage and do the hard thing. For example, I was coaching one executive

who had an “anger issue” with one of his direct reports, a manager. He wanted to get rid of the angry feelings, because he saw them as a problem. However, the manager tended to blame and excuse his poor performances, never taking ownership of his mistakes, and therefore never changing his behavior. This attitude would make any normal person angry. So, the manager was shifted to another position (and ultimately left). The exec’s “anger problem” went away, because it wasn’t a problem. His anger was his friend, a signal that something was awry.

Here are two to-dos: first, begin to ask yourself “How do I feel about this situation or person?” That is, be focused on your emotions. Attunement increases to the level you pay attention to it. Secondly, have some “feeling conversations” with a friend or two who is familiar with that world: your spouse, an attuned colleague, your coach. Being with a person who is comfortable with emotional language will help you pick up nuances you may be missing.

Creativity. During these times, creativity is a prized ability. When the old paradigms are no longer working, new ones must come in from all sectors of work: sales, marketing, accounting, administration, and HR. Creativity is simply rearranging elements in a way that provides a new solution or opportunity. That is, when you look at your resources—your people, competition, mission, and finances—in different ways and different combinations, you’re more likely to gain a result that works better than the old way. Even if you make many mistakes, it’s better than continuing what is no longer working, because you are learning every time.

How can you develop your own creativity? While there are gifted people with innate ability, you can develop that capacity for yourself. I suggest that you establish a creativity context for yourself. Make some intentional time in writing down all the pieces of the puzzle: the problem, the resources, the people involved, the opportunities. You might put each of these on a different 3x5 card. Then rearrange them as if you would a set of cards, randomly. Look for new patterns and new connections and see if a different approach arises.

Don’t operate with “half a brain.” Be a whole person, and a whole leader. You will notice the results. **PE**

John Townsend is a psychologist, author of 20 books, and a business and leadership consultant and coach. His latest book is Leadership Beyond Reason. Visit www.drjohnstownsend.com.

ACTION: Cultivate your creativity.