

ABCs of Wisdom

C- Courage

Whatever you think courage is, think again.

We know Courage (also called bravery or valour) is the choice and **willingness** to confront **agony, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation**.

But did you know the root of the word courage is cor - the Latin word for heart?

In one of its earliest forms, the word courage meant "To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart."

Oh my, that struck a cord with me. Courage in my mind was always a big word indicating big fears like death and disease. Courage is often thought of as facing some fate worse than death. In truth most of us will not have to face a horrific situation.

However, you will, if you haven't already, face a very real situation requiring actual courage – 'to speak one's mind by telling one's heart.'

I had not considered that speaking my mind and revealing my heart was courageous. And yet on many occasions my deep desire for belonging and acceptance kept me from sharing my heart in a truly honest way.

Are you being authentic? Are you truly living the life you were created to live? Authenticity takes courage.

For me it was standing in front of a judge pleading my case during a contentious divorce. Dealing with an intimidator, and I was, required courage.

It requires courage for single mothers to take their ex to court for child support. It takes courage for women to leave abusive relationships. And yet this past year we've seen women come forward to expose abuse in the past by, in many cases, men in powerful positions. That required courage.

Staying small

"So many women spend their lives playing small. I call it ungodly contentment. We find a quiet little corner in the world and spend our days maintaining a comfortable nest. Though, of course, such work can be a holy endeavor, it can also be an escape; an unholy refusal to live the life of transformation and faith God is calling us to live. Our penchant for playing small can sabotage our growth and our calling to shine." – Janet Davis, *My Own Worst Enemy*

You are not small.

In 1971 when I was a newlywed Helen Reddy released a song, "I am Woman Hear me Roar."

She wrote:

“Oh yes I am wise, but it’s wisdom born of pain.
Yes, I’ve paid the price but look how much I gained.
If I have to I can do anything,
I am strong.”

I needed to hear those words at the time.

Facing fear

The most serious regret of my life came many years later. I was not strong, not wise, and not courageous. I should’ve confronted my ex when he didn’t keep his word regarding promises when our sons were in his care. I simply didn’t have the courage to deal with his strong intimidation. You might say he had my number. This regret goes deep.

My hope is that you will face the gremlins that prevent you from standing your ground. Sometimes it is necessary to face down the gremlins in your head when they ask you the question, “Just who do you think you are?” If you hear that gremlin sitting on your shoulder, whispering in your ear words that cause you to doubt yourself, face him down. When you hear those words, have an answer.

Overcoming Criticism

If you fear the sting of criticism, if you are worn out from striving, and come short over and over, know that your enthusiasm and devotion is worth the effort. Perseverance develops courage and wisdom.

I like the way Theodore Roosevelt said it,

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong *woman* stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the *woman* who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends *herself* in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if she fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that her place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.” Theodore Roosevelt

My challenge for you is to recognize the gremlins, face them down and realize the strength you have as a woman.