

More Thoughts on Courage

By
Kevin A. Rafferty

I love the word courage. Its origin is from the Latin word *cor*, meaning heart, and it offers an image of people at their best. A courageous person is someone who puts personal safety and comfort aside and takes risk for honorable and worthwhile causes.

What does courage have to do with work, business, and leadership? “The father of all virtues is courage, because courage is the quality of every quality at its highest testing point. Eventually every value gets tested. Whether or not we will align our values, our lives, and our habits with those principles is the big question,” says Steven Covey. “To be or not be” is still the **BIG QUESTION** – in other words, will we really do it at the moment of truth? Don’t these words apply to our work as well as our personal life?

“The infectious nature of strikingly courageous behavior on the part of one person can inspire – and also in part can shame – a whole group,” notes William Bennett, author of *The Book of Virtues*. Courageous people are more in demand in our working world than ever before.

Bennett’s comment on Aristotle’s quote “We become brave by doing brave acts: by saying that “courage is a settled disposition to feel appropriate degrees of fear and confidence in challenging situations. It is also a settled disposition to stand one’s ground, to advance or retreat as wisdom dictates.”

I have found some other words about courage you may find helpful or uplifting when faced with difficult or challenging situations in evolving work world. I hope they are as meaningful and enlightening to you as they are to me.

Courage, n: *“The state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear or vicissitudes with self possession, confidence and resolution; bravery.”*
American Heritage Dictionary

“Perfect courage is to do without witnesses that one would be capable of doing with the world looking on.”
Francois de la Rochefoucauld

“Some have been thought brave because they were afraid to run away.”
18th Century English Proverb

“Courage charms us, because it indicates that a man love an idea better than all things in the world, that he is thinking neither of his bed, nor his dinner, nor his money, but will venture all to put in action the invisible thought of his mind.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not the absence of fear.”

Mark Twain

“You take a number of small steps which you believe are right, thinking maybe tomorrow somebody will treat this as a dangerous provocation. And then you wait. If there is no reaction, you take another step: courage is only an accumulation of small steps.”

George Konrad

“Courage is grace under pressure.”

Ernest Hemmingway

A Smile

Let other cheer the winning man, there's one I hold worthwhile; 'Tis he who does the best he can, then looses with a smile.”

Beaten he is, but not to stay

Down with the rank and file.

That man will win some other day, who loses with a smile.

- From William Bennett's Book of Virtues

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the road less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
- Robert Frost

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