The Six Attributes of Courage
Quotes and exercises to help you be your best and bravest self


Courage is something that everybody wants — an attribute of good character that makes us worthy of respect. From the Bible to fairy tales; ancient myths to Hollywood movies, our culture is rich with exemplary tales of bravery and self-sacrifice for the greater good. From the cowardly lion in The Wizard of Oz who finds the courage to face the witch, to David battling Goliath in the Bible, to Star Wars and Harry Potter, children are raised on a diet of heroic and inspirational tales.

Yet courage is not just physical bravery. History books tell colorful tales of social activists, such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, who chose to speak out against injustice at great personal risk. Entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs and Walt Disney, who took financial risks to follow their dreams and innovate are like modern-day knights, exemplifying the rewards and public accolades that courage can bring. There are different types of courage, ranging from physical strength and endurance to mental stamina and innovation. The below quotes demonstrate six different ways in which we define courage. Which are most relevant to you? In the last section, I present an exercise to help you define and harness your own courage.

(1) Feeling Fear Yet Choosing to Act
• “Bran thought about it. 'Can a man still be brave if he's afraid?' 'That is the only time a man can be brave,' his father told him.” — George R.R. Martin, A Game of Thrones
• Fear and courage are brothers. — Proverb
• I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear — Nelson Mandela
• There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The true courage is in facing danger when you are afraid. — L.Frank Baum, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
• Being terrified but going ahead and doing what must be done—that's courage. The one who feels no fear is a fool, and the one who lets fear rule him is a coward. — Piers Anthony
• Courage is about doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared. Have the courage to act instead of react." — Oliver Wendell Holmes

(2) Following Your Heart
• “Passion is what drives us crazy, what makes us do extraordinary things, to discover, to challenge ourselves. Passion is and should always be the heart of courage.” — Midori Komatsu
• And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” — Steve Jobs, Stanford commencement speech, June 2005
• To dare is to lose one’s footing momentarily. To not dare is to lose oneself.
  — Soren Kierkegaard
• “It takes courage ... to endure the sharp pains of self discovery rather than choose to take
  the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.” — Marianne
  Williamson, "Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of 'A Course in Miracles'"

3) Persevering in the Face of Adversity
• When we are afraid we ought not to occupy ourselves with endeavoring to prove that
  there is no danger, but in strengthening ourselves to go on in spite of the danger. — Mark
  Rutherford
• A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer. — Ralph
  Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882)
• Most of our obstacles would melt away if, instead of cowering before them, we should
  make up our minds to walk boldly through them — Orison Swett Marden (1850-1924)
• Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the   day
  that says I'll try again tomorrow. — Mary Anne Radmacher
• “Go back?” he thought. "No good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only
  thing to do! On we go!” So up he got, and trotted along with his little sword held in front
  of him and one hand feeling the wall, and his heart all of a patter and a pitter.” — J.R.R.
  Tolkien, The Hobbit
• “It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.” — Mark
  Twain

(4) Standing Up For What Is Right
• Sometimes standing against evil is more important than defeating it. The greatest heroes
  stand because it is right to do so, not because they believe they will walk away with their
  lives. Such selfless courage is a victory in itself — N.D. Wilson, Dandelion Fire
• Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes — Maggie Kuhn, Social Activist
• From caring comes courage. — Lao Tzu
• Anger is the prelude to courage. — Eric Hoffer

(5) Expanding Your Horizons; Letting Go of the Familiar
• Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore. — Lord
  Chesterfield
• “This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a
  temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity,
  of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.” — Robert F. Kennedy
• Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage. — Anais Nin
• (6) Facing Suffering With Dignity or Faith...
• “There is no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bear witness that a man has the
  greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.” — Frank
• The ideal man bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of circumstances. — Aristotle
• Until the day of his death, no man can be sure of his courage. — Jean Anoulh
• A man of courage is also full of faith. — Marcus Tullius Cicero

**Courage-Building Exercise**

For this exercise, you will need a notebook and pen, as well as a quiet, uninterrupted space in which you can reflect.

Beginning with the first definition of courage, "Feeling Afraid Yet Choosing to Act," answer the following questions:

Think of a situation as an adult when you felt afraid, yet chose to face your fear?

(a) What did you observe, think, and feel at the time? (e.g., "I saw the rollercoaster and felt butterflies in my stomach").
(b) What did you or the people around you say, think, and do to help you face your fear? (e.g., "I told myself that if little kids could go on it, so could I").
(c) At what point did your fear start to go down? How did you feel afterwards?
(d) Now think back on a situation in childhood in which you faced your fear. How was it the same or different than the first situation?
(e) Finally, think of a situation you are currently facing that creates fear or anxiety. What are you most afraid of? (e.g., being fired if I ask my boss for a raise).
(f) Now, is there a way to apply the same skills you used in the two earlier situations to be more courageous this situation. Remind yourself that you have these skills and have used them successfully in the past. What mental or environmental barriers stand in the way of using these skills? How can you cope with or get rid of these barriers?

Repeat this exercise over the course of a week, using each definition of courage above. On Day 7, come up with your own definition of courage that is most meaningful to you and repeat the whole exercise using this definition.

**About the Author**

Melanie Greenberg, Ph.D. is a Clinical Psychologist in Mill Valley, California, and expert on Mindfulness, Positive Psychology, and Mind-Body issues, who has published more than 50 scholarly works. Previously a Professor in a Graduate Psychology Program, she is now a practicing psychologist, executive and life coach, speaker, and media consultant. Dr. Greenberg provides workshops and speaking engagements for organizations, life, weight loss, and career coaching. and psychotherapy for individuals and couples.

Taken from Psychology Today [https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mindful-self-express/201208/the-six-attributes-courage](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mindful-self-express/201208/the-six-attributes-courage)