

The Joy of Living Courageously: Moving from Fear to Love

Rev. DebraRae

March 4, 2007

Planet Earth is a truly unique place to experience life in that it is a planet of dichotomies —opposite ends of the spectrum—and everything in between— exist here: day and night, sadness and joy, depression and mania, good and evil, stop and go, sun and moon, male and female, black and white, still and flow and, of course love and . . . and what? What is at the other end of the spectrum of love? One might logically conclude it is hate. It is not. It is, in fact, fear.

The true opposite of love is fear. In love one expands; in fear one shrinks. In fear one becomes closed; in love one opens. In fear one doubts; in love one trusts. And in life, it is often challenging to trust.

In “Courage: The Joy of Living Dangerously,” Osho, referring to insecurity—not trusting—as an intrinsic part of life, invites us:

“Don’t call it uncertainty—call it wonder. Don’t call it insecurity—call it freedom.”

Courage means going into the unknown in spite of all the fear. Courage does not mean fearlessness. Fearlessness happens if you go on being courageous and more courageous. Courageous again. And again. And again.

The word courage comes from the Latin root *cor*, which means “heart.” So to live courageously means to live from the heart—not the head from which one creates a security of logic around them. To live with courage is to live with the unknown—to live with insecurity—to move into trust.

Fearlessness is the ultimate experience of courage. The courageous person goes into the unknown in spite of all the fears. Courage is not about ignoring the fear; the fear is there; courage is about going into the unknown in spite of all the fears.

Courage doesn't always look the way we might imagine. *“Sometimes courage doesn't roar. Sometimes courage is getting up in the morning and beginning again.”*

The Tao of Courage—a simple story—illustrates just that.

Imagine an ancient tree, 300 feet high, 3,000 years old. The very presence gives a feeling of strength and power. Millions of roots spread deep inside the earth. The tree stands with power. A great storm comes and, of course, the big tree fights—it doesn't want to yield, to surrender—but after the storm, it has fallen. It is dead and all its strength is gone. The storm was too much—the storm is always too much because the storm comes from the whole, and a tree is just an individual.

Then there are small plants and ordinary grass. When the storm comes the grass yields and the storm cannot do any harm to it. At most, it gives it a good cleansing and when the storm is gone, the small plants and grasses are again dancing high and strong. The grass has almost no roots, it can be pulled out by a small child, but it defeated the storm. Why?

The grass followed by way of Tao and the big tree followed the way of Charles Darwin. The big tree was very logical: it tried to resist; it tried to show its strength. If you try to show your strength, you will be defeated. Strong trees are defeated. Taoists are just like small plants: no one can defeat them because they are always ready to yield. It is all in how one approaches life: is life something to be conquered and defeated OR is life something to which one yields—choosing to go with the flow?

I have witnessed and personally experienced amazing shifts when I have chosen to yield—surrender and release—give up control to manipulate the outcome—everything from coming to a deep understanding of what is to profound physical, emotion, mental and spiritual shifts.

Years ago—when I was working “victim” energy—I required TMJ surgery after suffering for several years following a car accident. I had a great deal of fear around this surgery for several reasons, in addition to potential medical side effects such as total paralysis of the lower half of my face. Most of the fear was around not being able to eat for seven to eight weeks because my teeth would be wired shut until my jaw healed in its new position. Also, because I was told I would not be able to talk for several

weeks and possibly not until my teeth were unwired. Really? ME NOT TALK? Obviously, the surgeon had no idea to whom he was speaking!

Well, I got on that one right away: (*Clench Teeth as if wired shut*): I started “practicing” talking as if my teeth were wired. Didn’t take me long and friends said they could understand me, although it sounded like I had food in my mouth while I was talking. I kept practicing. My intention was to return to work, which included a significant amount of phone answering and customer service, within three weeks of the surgery.

With the potentially traumatic experience of not being able to talk out of the way, I faced another trauma when my boss at the time asked if I planned to quit smoking after the surgery. Honestly, I thought it a perfect validation of what I already suspected: he had lost his mind! Quit smoking? I was already being told I had to quit eating and talking. Was he insane? Did he think I was insane? Was he trying to make me go insane? I asked if he was insane and let him know that I had no intention of quitting my 2-1/2 pack-a-day, 25 year addiction—especially not while going through this already traumatizing experience.

I had a lot invested in the outcome of the TMJ surgery in that I had been in constant chronic pain that included debilitating migraines, for over two years. I had fear around the outcome of the surgery as I had had five years of physical therapy and a lot of mouth work, including, braces and gum surgery, which were required prior to the TMJ surgery. The TMJ surgery was, in fact, a last recourse. I was told that many were successful and I might enjoy complete relief of all pain, including the migraines. I was also told that some TMJ surgeries were not successful. And, of those that were successful, some reversed when the jaw “popped back” into its original position, which could occur at any time, even years later.

Lots of fear to process: possible paralysis; the surgery might not work at all, leaving me in constant, chronic pain; it could work and then revert. Not to mention the horror stories I heard from a respected friend in the dental field informed me some people who have their teeth wired nearly go insane because the desire to open their mouth is so intense. Thanks for sharing!

More fear: I might go insane from not being able to open my mouth and, if not from that, from not being able to eat. YIKES!

And I won't even go into the dynamics involved in the potential, possible release of chronic pain and how that in itself is stressful and fearful for someone working victim energy. How would I live my life if I was pain free? I had done it for so long that it became my life. Who was I under all that pain and fear? I didn't remember, and that was frightening.

So . . . five years after the accident, my surgery date was set. And, in spite of all the fears I had, I went forward. I believed in something. I didn't have clarity as to what, but I knew I trusted my next step, which was to keep moving forward with the process.

The surgery went perfectly. I healed with no pain or medication. All the pain was gone. No more migraines. I started walking. I was healing. I never craved food until three days before my teeth were unwired. I quit smoking—a surprise blessing among all the others. I didn't care about opening my mouth; never even thought about it. I returned to work three weeks later and functioned well even with my teeth wired. I healed. In spite of the fears, I healed and I healed well.

How many times have you acknowledged the fear you sensed, felt or knew was in your space AND took a step forward on your path in spite of it? The fear is still there AND, if you go on accepting the challenge again and again, the fears eventually disappear.

Osho shares a story on the perspective of living:

The KGB knocks on Yussel Finkelstein's door one dark night. Yussel opens the door. The KGB man barks out, "Does Yussel Finkelstein live here?"

"No," replies Yussel.

"No? So what is your name?"

"Yussel Finkelstine."

The frustrated KGB man accusingly inquires, "Did you just say that you did not live here?"

Yussel replies, "You call this living?"

Just living is not really living. Look at your life. Can you call it a blessing? Can you call it a gift, a present of existence? Would you like this life to be given to you again and again?

Don't be hesitant. Don't worry about getting it wrong. This is common programming: we have been taught never to do anything wrong, and then we become so hesitant, so fearful, so frightened of doing wrong, that we can become stuck. We cannot move because something wrong may happen.

If you are authentic about your joy, your tears, your dance, sooner or later there will be people who will begin to understand you, and they may start joining your caravan.

Listening to your own heart, you will never be divided. Listening to your own heart, you will start moving in the right direction, without ever thinking about what is right and what is wrong.

Going many, many times astray, one learns how not to go astray. Committing many mistakes, one learns what a mistake is and how not to commit it. Knowing what is error, one comes closer and closer to what is truth. It is an individual exploration; you cannot depend on others' conclusions.

So what is the definition of RIGHT? I delighted and agree whole-heartedly with Osho's definition: *"That which is harmonious with existence is right, and that which is disharmonious with existence is wrong."*

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath for your body, validating it for all that it is. Breathe, gently, deliberately. This is life. Create a gold sun above your head and throw a pinch of willingness energy up there. . . fill in. Allow yourself to be courageous by being willing. Surrender. Release. Be in the flow of what is.

Osho proclaims, *"The whole art for the new humanity consists in the secret of consciously listening to the heart—alertly, attentively. And following it wherever it takes you."*

Listen. Where does your heart want to take you?

Create a gold sun above your head and put a pinch of whatever energy you would like more of in your space up there. Be patient as it grows. Allow your gold sun to expand and become as big as you can have. When you're ready, lovingly give yourself the energy in your gold sun.

Listen to your heart. Create your own reality. Be courageous and keep moving forward on your path in spite of the fears. As you come to know your own truth, your courage will eventually transmute fear into love. Enjoy the gift of life you have chosen for yourself.

And so it is!

BENEDICTION

Again, from “Courage: The Joy of Living Dangerously,” Osho writes:

You cannot be truthful if you are not courageous.

You cannot be loving if you are not courageous.

You cannot be trusting if you are not courageous.

You cannot inquire into reality if you are not courageous.

Hence courage comes first . . .

. . . and everything else follows.

In closing, a quote from Anais Nin:

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.