

The
BOOK
of
EMOTIONS

Or — how it feels to feel

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GRIEF

What Path Will You Take When Grief Visits?

AIMEE DUFRESNE

World ruptured

A vital piece of soul ripped out

The ache, the burn, the betrayal

You've opened your heart only to be robbed

Anger rises to the surface, overflowing

But it is not alone

Despair bubbles up with it

Along with Denial, Confusion

And a host of emotions

To wade through at once

Support surrounds you

But there is no denying

This is a journey of one

Your journey of one

What will you do?

Will you cater to the crying inside?

Laying down your own life in surrender

Staying in the swirl of pain

Anguish crushing your dreams

Past, Present, Future

Or will you dismiss it,

Pushing it below the surface

Laying a thick layer of anger atop

Beating it when it threatens to sprout

Announcing to the world, and yourself

Nevermind, you are over it

While it simmers beneath

Patiently waiting to boil

The grass of confusion

The dirt of despair

The worms of regret

Rocks of heartache

Hot magma of anger

Will the wave of grief overwhelm you?
Or will you take the warrior's path?

The warrior's path is not easy
It requires deep digging
Beneath the pain,
Feeling the full weight and breadth
Of all that comes up along the way

The grass of confusion
The dirt of despair
The worms of regret
Rocks of heartache
Hot magma of anger

As you dig deeper,
The sweet smell of Mother Earth
Rises, intoxicating you
Encouraging, easing the way
Deeper and deeper

At the core you will discover compassion
For others yes,
But more importantly
For yourself

Your losses
Your wins
Your laughs
Your tears

*Will you let the tears flow
And then be willing to go
Into the unknown?*

Your mistakes
Your mishaps
Will all be held in Compassion
And seen as simply
Part of the experience
Rather than being judged
As good or bad
Positive or negative
Right or wrong

At the core you will also realize your strength
The strength you had all along to get there
You will encounter pure iron
Strengthened by impurities
You have earned your armor of steel

Will you let the tears flow
And then be willing to go

Into the unknown?
Knowing there is such loss
Knowing that beside that loss
Beneath that pain, the coexistence of
Compassion, love, and joy
And the steel strength you have uncovered
Will erect a new dimension to your life
Forever honoring your loved ones
Knowing this is your path
Yet you are never truly alone

AIMEE DUFRESNE is a Joy Catalyst and soul-shifting creator, writer, and traveler. She is the proud author of *Keep Going: From Grief to Growth*, a memoir about love, loss, life's journey and the power of perseverance. Aimee is currently writing her next book, *52 Lessons I Learned From My Father*. Website: aimeedufresne.com.





Don't Push the River

TRACY STAMPER

Four words have stayed with me since I first heard them: 'Don't Push the River.'

Though I didn't have a full sense for what these words meant when I first met them, I felt their wisdom. They took up residence within me, telling me that I had much to learn from them. As they slowly revealed themselves to me over the years, I saw so many realms to which they applied: parenting, healing... really, Life in general. Particularly poignant was how they illuminated the rocky road of grieving in a way that was deeply helpful and also required a scary surrender.

Grief's river flows as grief's river flows. Grief is a houseguest that determines when she visits, how long she stays, when she leaves, and when she returns. She unapologetically sets up camp in our home of body, emotions and mind. She stays as long as she damn well pleases, laughs when asked to leave, can't be evicted, and takes over command central of the household.

Grief adheres solely to her own agenda. Trying to force our agenda of timelines of acceptability merely amuses her. She is the river, and it is unwise (not to mention pointless) to push the river.

Pushing the river gets us precisely nowhere, other than exhausted through fruitless effort. And still, after all our efforts to push the river, the river flows as the river flows.

Grief flows as grief flows.

It would be quite convenient if grief stuck around for only as long as one's employer's bereavement leave allowed for time off. But, grief is inconvenient.

It may be far more comfortable and understandable (to those friends who don't get it) if a widowed friend would 'move on' and reenter the dating world a year or two after losing her beloved. But, grief is uncomfortable and misunderstood.

It would feel more manageable if grief stayed home and off-duty while we are at work, our friends' engagement party, happy hour or our child's school play. But, grief is unmanageable.

It would be far more palatable if grief stayed quiet and polite and wouldn't intrude on others' shaky ground which teeters on their own stuffed emotions of unresolved grief. But, grief isn't palatable. It isn't always quiet. And grief scoffs at 'polite.'

Grief is inconvenient. When fresh and raw, she runs hot crimson, pouncing on your chest first thing in the morning with the realization that searing loss was not just a nightmare, but a seemingly unbearable waking reality. Grief's graying occurs when she has stuck around for quite a spell. She is all-encompassing and zaps life of color. Longer term, she turns moods blue and paints in darker, more muted hues. Eventually, she uncurls her fingers' grip and allows Technicolor to slowly return drop by drop as grief is released drip by drip.

Grief that springs from the deepest parts of our hearts doesn't leave completely. There will be those times of aquamarine tears that flow unexpectedly, years after grief's crimson fury has melted. Even when grief checks out as a houseguest, she always leaves something behind. Those

*It would be far more palatable if grief
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And grief scoffs at 'polite.'*

earrings on the bedside table are hers. She could show up unexpectedly at any time to reclaim what's hers.

She is merciless and merciful. Grief mercilessly takes one by the shoulders, shakes them, and steers them wherever she so chooses whenever she so chooses. Mercifully, she shakes us awake with her reminders of what is truly important to one's heart navigation system. She steers us straight into the heart of authenticity.

Tears are her currency, and she coaxes us to let them flow. She seeks saltwater release through our body's release valve of crying. Body wisdom knows the healing power of letting it flow. Scientists have discovered in laboratories what our bodies intuitively know: crying literally releases stress and pain. Tears cried during times of stress and pain and grief contain the stress hormone ACTH. By releasing this chemical from the body

one aquamarine tear at a time, we are actively releasing stress and pain from our bodies, emotions and minds. Saltwater cleanses the soul.

Yet, modern man seems hell-bent on pushing the river by stuffing down tears and trying to prescribe grief to artificial manmade notions of how long grief is allowed to stick around. So often, we approach grief as if we can control her. In response, she laughs and does what she does.

Grief's river flows as grief's river flows.

Don't push the river.

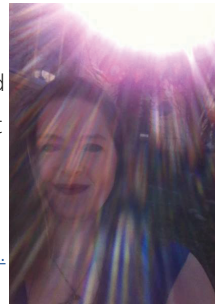
Mother Nature always wins.

Surrender to her ancient power.

Technicolor will return.

For now, all there is to do is to let her river run through and cry a river of tears.

TRACY STAMPER is a dancer at heart, in mind, of body, and with words. Her writing has been featured in *Rebelle Society* and *Elephant Journal*. Her current favorite colors are purple, orange and glitter. She likes her chocolate dark, her inspiration flowing and her car dances to be uninhibited. Website: [facebook.com/DancingPenTracyStamper/](https://www.facebook.com/DancingPenTracyStamper/)



COURAGE

Heeding the Call of Courage

AIMEE DUFRESNE

One day as I was listening, courage whispered in my ear.

Gently it told me we'd be good friends for this year.

Courage, I implored, haven't we already met?

Seriously, how much more courage do I need to get?

It giggled very softly and said simply I am here.

Little did I know it would be quite a courageous year.

Every time words poured out from my heart

Courage was my muse to start.

At the point each story came to an end.

Courage squeezed my hand and said send.

When disappointment visited, and plans began to alter,

Courage wrapped its arms around me and told me not to falter.

When opportunities came that pushed me out of my zone.

Courage nodded its head and retained a reassuring tone.

Courage slipped in at the strangest times, like when I was feeling free.

It twirled me around and danced, delighting in just being me.

Courage stretched out to raise my voice.

And lift it up louder and louder.

Courage helped me make a difficult choice.

And told me it couldn't be prouder.

Courage stood by my side as my shadows I did face.

In the darkness, I could feel the light of Courage as my base.

Courage lit a torch to guide my way in deeper,

After resisting Courage for months, I realized it was a keeper.

I turned to Courage and said sorry for pushing you away.

Without you, I now realize, I could never have gotten through this day.

Nor could I have endured the losses or noticed the gains of this year.

Courage grinned widely and in a strong voice reassured, *I'm always here.*

*In the darkness, I could feel
the light of Courage as my base.
Courage lit a torch to guide
my way in deeper*

What next I anxiously asked her, what am I to see?

With a sigh she answered, Don't let fear, hate or violence overtake me.

At times when they appear, you will see we have similar features.

But don't confuse me with fear, hate or violence for we are very different creatures.

How will I tell the difference if they look like your kin?

Easy, Courage replied, look for the Light within.

AIMEE DUFRESNE is a Joy Catalyst and soul-shifting creator, writer, and traveler. She is the proud author of *Keep Going: From Grief to Growth*, a memoir about love, loss, life's journey and the power of perseverance. Aimee is currently writing her next book, *52 Lessons I Learned From My Father*. Website: aimeedufresne.com.



Ten Ways Courage is...

PATRICIA L. ATCHISON

Courage is strength drawn from your soul-source in the darkest of times.

Courage is stepping into that moment when life says, “I need you to be strong”.

Courage is going forward because you can no longer go back.

Courage is climbing a steep mountain trail and finding the strength to take one more step.

Courage is facing the unknown with steely determination and unwavering attention.

Courage is creating a new path where one has never travelled before.

Courage is showing up with the life force of a super hero.

Courage is believing in yourself to make a difference.

Courage is knowing you don't care what others think, you'll do it anyway.

Courage is living each day with tenacity and determination, knowing it is ENOUGH.

PATRICIA L. ATCHISON shares a love of writing, dancing Nia (Holistic Fitness), and making doll and teddy bear creations. Her children's books, Little Blue Penguin and McKenzie's Frosty Surprise have delighted many youngsters. She blogs and thinks of new books to write while living passionately. Website: patriciaatchison.ca





THE COLORS OF COURAGE

The Courage to Love

ABIGAIL TAMSI

Brené Brown in her book, “The Gifts of Imperfection,” said that...

“The root of the word courage is cor—the Latin word for heart. In one of its earliest forms, the word courage had a very different definition than it does today. Courage originally meant “To speak one’s mind by telling all one’s heart.” Over time, this definition has changed, and, today, courage is more synonymous with being heroic.

We certainly need heroes, but I think we’ve lost touch with the idea that speaking honestly and openly about who we are, about what we’re feeling, and about our experiences (good and bad) is the definition of courage.”

After I read this, it all started to make sense.

Although I’ve come to know courage as interchangeable with bravery, I’ve always felt that these words have a deeper meaning to them. I know that because I don’t use these words very lightly, always reserving them for some big feat. Looking back at the defining moments in life, I have been courageous during the times when I knew in my heart that I needed to do what I needed to do because I either believed in it my heart or it has been my heart’s true desire.

Indeed, its true. Courage is of the heart. I see it as more than just speaking from my heart. It's the rage of my heart. It's my heart's way of showing her to the world.

My heart cannot help but be seen, heard, and felt. No matter how many times I would try to ignore her, close her off, put walls around her, protect her, bury her deep, she will still rise up and tell me she cannot be put aside.

My heart is the seat of everything I feel, everything I have ever felt, and everything I would ever desire. She's the one that sparks the fire in my being for everything I wish to experience. She's the one that makes this soul journey all worth it.

I can't ignore her. I have to look at her straight in the eye. I have to listen to what she has to say. I have to feel her joys and her sadness. And most of all, I have to feel her rage begging to be expressed in the world.

*I had to learn to see, hear and feel
that the courage I need truly comes
from my heart.*

So no matter that the little girl in me simply wants to protect her, I had to learn to see, hear and feel that the courage I need truly comes from my heart.

And it all started with the courage to love me first.

One tiny step at a time, I opened up to looking at all the parts of me as I am now. I allowed myself to be curious where I would usually shy. I breathed deeply as I allowed myself to feel the discomfort of finding out what's underneath my motives, my actions, my patterns in life.

I got to know me like I would get to know a potential lover. I gave myself the same attention and energy I've willingly given away to others before when I thought they could fill me up.

When I started getting to know me, I started giving back to me and I started loving me.

When I started getting to know me, I started to accept what makes me unique and I started loving me.

When I started getting to know me, I recognised how much I have endured and I loved myself all the more for them.

When I started loving me, I realised I'm the only one who can truly fill me up.

But these were not easy.

As I uncovered layer upon layer of hurt, trauma, and abuse piled up by myself and by others on me, shame, distrust, resentment and anger bubbled up, too. The journey of loving myself became a battleground.

But no matter that the part of me that hurt wanted to ignore, close off, put walls around, protect, and bury all the pain back deep, I knew that I couldn't anymore. In as much as it felt like I was reliving different painful events of my past at different times all over again, I was also being asked to courageously step through.

My heart was raging to be free. I had to open my eyes and see everything in a new light. I had to re-experience the pain but I also had to rise

up above it to know what it was trying to teach me. I had to inhabit the woman, instead of the victim child.

Just letting myself feel what I'm holding within my body is a courageous act. Too many times in the past, I haven't wanted to inhabit my body. Every time I'd feel into my chest and my legs, I'd feel the punches and kicks that I endured for so long. Every time I'd touch my skin, I'd remember how repulsed I felt when someone forced himself upon me. Every time I'd take in air, I'd remember how many times I wanted to exit this life.

But as I continued to listen to what my heart was telling me, that I'm strong and the pain is not all there is to it, I let myself feel the fire that's always been the catalyst to helping me get through those past events. I learned to tap into her more and more, not just in the do-or-die moments. In as much as I was afraid to feel what's been held for so long in my body, I let my body's intelligence heal me, too. All I needed to do was keep

*Just letting myself feel
what I'm holding within
my body is a courageous act.*

breathing right down to my belly and let the process of transformation do what it needed to do.

Through my breath, I grounded courage within my body and I have not looked back ever since. Though I still have a lifetime of lessons to learn, it's this courage to love myself by not letting the past take me that will continue to move me forward.

And if I can do it, so can you. It's what your heart is asking you to. Let the love from your heart radiate out to every cell in your body. Let it spark aliveness and fire you up to inhabit your unique self.

Courage has always lived within you. It's a gift from your heart.

ABIGAIL TAMSI is a self-proclaimed courageous woman and soul-writer. She loves and lives courageously, always aiming to step through the barriers that stop her from living and loving fully. Her life adventures pour out in her writing, which have been featured in *Rebelle Society* and *The Urban Howl*. Website <http://www.abigailtamsi.com>



A letter to my soul

Sometimes the path is hard and full of stones.

Often, it hurts you and leaves you broken.

I just want to show you something you may not know you have.

When your trip into sadness makes you feel alone,

To find the way to the strength you have,

Just smile.

When your journey into darkness makes you lose your path,

To find the way to your inner resources,

Just smile.

When your travel into fear makes you feel overwhelmed,

To find the way to your peace,

Just smile.

It is not a smile of sadness,

It is not a smile of resignation,

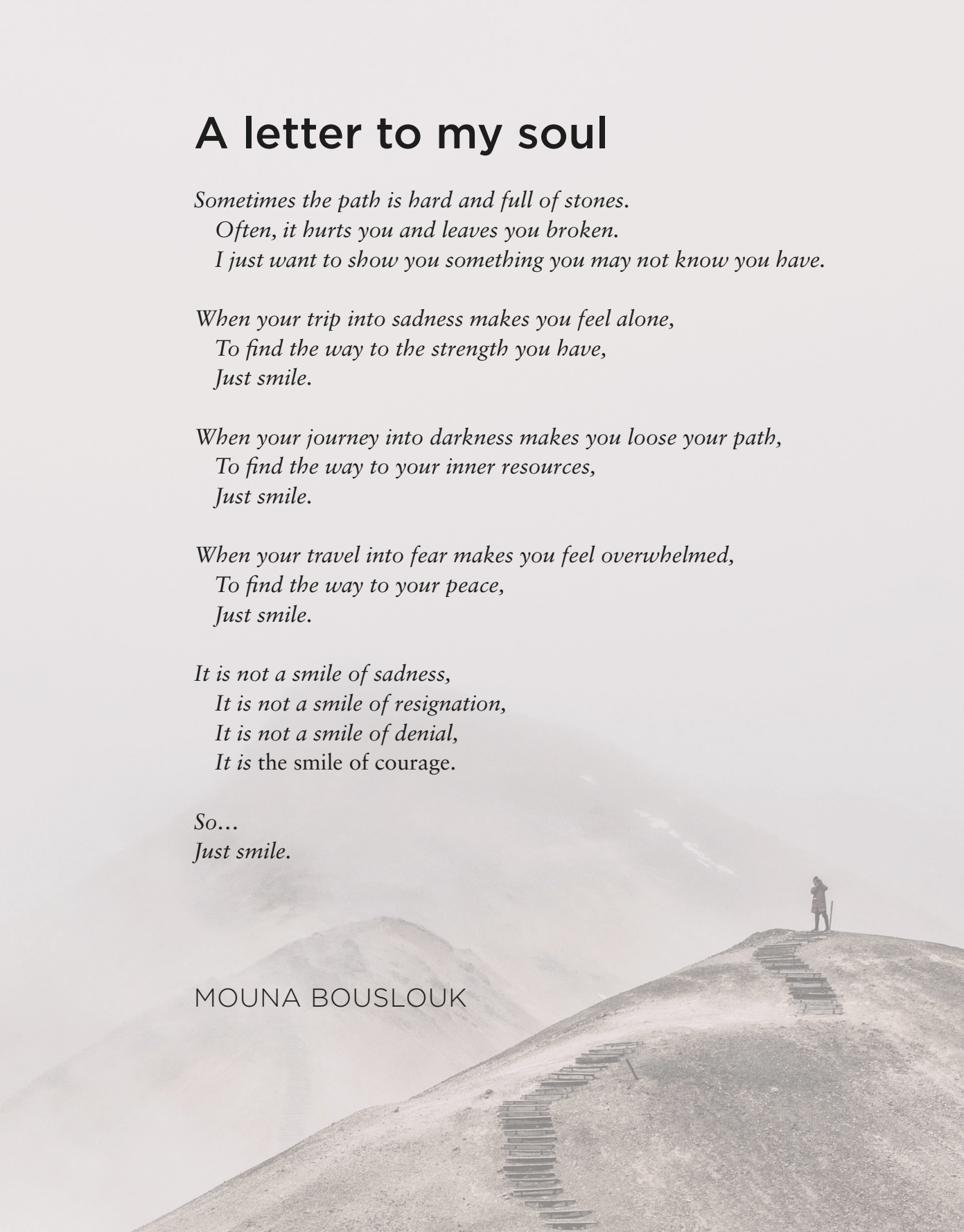
It is not a smile of denial,

It is the smile of courage.

So...

Just smile.

MOUNA BOUSLOUK



enCourage

TRACY STAMPER

Having bought into Hollywood's
bastardized version of Courage,
I didn't recognize her true spirit
until she knocked
from inside.

I answered to discover
that she is my heart,
uncovered.
She is spirit's deepest part.

A far cry from the story
in my mind's eye.
She's not mere bravado,
burly, surly and sure,
with ripped biceps
and a lion's roar.

Courage is all heart,
surely nothing less
with no need for
anything more.

Brave yet tender
far more quiet,
far stronger.

At her core
is the French word ‘cœur’

*The heart is
teacher
barometer
anchor
muse
and source
of
Courage.*

for ‘heart,’
in tribute to
the art
of living life
from, of, with and for heart.

Integrity
is Courage’s intent.
‘Integrity’ means ‘whole.’
Integrity’s sole need
is to hear and heed
the heart’s wishes.
Here’s to the Courage
to respond
to Life
wholeheartedly.

True Courage calls forth
actions, words,
stillnesses, silences
in direct translation of the heart’s desire.

The heart is
teacher
barometer
anchor
muse
and source
of
Courage.

Listening to what the heart beats for
teaches what matters
most.

How fast the heart beats is directly proportional
to how much Courage
is required.
Bodily biofeedback
anchors me in me.
My Muse of Courage
sings me along
fortifying through her song.

Knowing my heart
tells me
what is Courage-worthy.

Courage is measured
in moments
meant to shake
us awake
to rhythmic drum heartbeats.

Every time anyone has risen to
an awesome act of bravery,
they have been fueled
by fire of heart,
by purpose of passion.

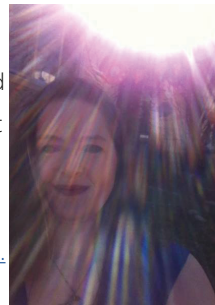
*Knowing my heart
tells me
what is Courage-worthy.*

*“You know, sometimes all you need
is twenty seconds of insane courage.
Just literally twenty seconds
of just embarrassing bravery.
And I promise you,
something great will come of it.”
- Benjamin Mee’s ‘We Bought a Zoo’*

C.S. Lewis’ infamous words
ring true:
“Courage, dear heart.”

enCourage
by holding your heart dear.
Listen to heart
to live
Life with Courage
as art.

TRACY STAMPER is a dancer at heart, in mind, of body, and with words. Her writing has been featured in Rebelle Society and Elephant Journal. Her current favorite colors are purple, orange and glitter. She likes her chocolate dark, her inspiration flowing and her car dances to be uninhibited. Website: [facebook.com/DancingPenTracyStamper/](https://www.facebook.com/DancingPenTracyStamper/)



Courage

BRETTON KEATING

I don't think of courage as an emotion.

Courage seems like something that comes from within. A fire, a drive, a certain unstoppable, get-it-done force.

Emotions are something I can catch. They happen uncontrollably. I can't force them. I can't fake them. They're just there. They overcome me for an instant, and then, often just as quickly, they're gone again.

My fingers fly across the page and yet it only feels like courage when he tells me he's read it.

Because how do we be ourselves, freely open and honest, in a world that wants us to be anything but?

Everyone has lists of what they want. We draw lines and edges against anything out of place with the picture in our minds of what happiness looks like.

We focus on images and descriptions of people. We're afraid of seeing people as they actually are. We avoid eye contact because some people have the ability to see into the soul. And that is terrifying to us.

Allowing ourselves to be seen: this, to me, is courage. As is the understanding and acceptance that judgments and love can coexist. There's a

*Allowing ourselves to be seen:
this, to me, is courage*

love that runs deeper than judgment, deeper than the surface. And the truth may feel harsh, but it's in that discomfort that we grow. We become strong enough to step fully into our skin-born shoes. We grow in our ability to move forward.

"You have a say in this," my teacher tells me. I am not a victim of whim, ceaselessly floating through circumstance. Heartache and pain do not happen to me, they happen with me. God does not stand behind me, but at my side. I am a partner in the mess. I choose how to shape the chaos. Let it burn, or be burned.

Courage is the moment of action. Courage is moving without pause. It's in stomping down the door when you hear the screams coming from inside. It's in stepping in, intervening even when it isn't happening to you, when getting involved may mean pain or even death. Because sometimes worse is the pain of living with the knowledge that you could have acted, and you did nothing. Instead, you watched it happen to somebody else, or you looked the other way. Courage is in pushing the attacker away from my frozen neck. I can still feel the place where the prongs made contact. My body will forever remain imprinted with the sensation of

crumbling to the ground. Like a rag doll, I fell. Inside the bubble where it happened, there was only my attacker, God, and me. God saved me, and God gave me the courage to wake the next morning and face a place that had suddenly turned scary. I have always lived a privileged life. My world was bright and sunny, but my eyes saw through a dark, clouded filter, after that night. And I was largely fortunate; I walked away, physically unharmed, except for the marks around my neck. I was not raped; he held a knife, but did not use it. Yet it took me years to tell people what had happened in a straightforward way. I can now say the words, “I was attacked,” and it still feels like something that didn’t happen to me, that wasn’t real, that I don’t want to own. But it also doesn’t feel like something I should push away and run from, no matter how uncomfortable it may make others, and consequently, myself, feel, that it happened and that I’m willing to talk about it. The first few people I told listened to my story before instructing me to shake it off, stand back up, turn the other way, and keep moving forward. But how do you move forward when you hold fear, not only in your heart, but in every cell of your being?

“Come on, big jump,” I say, as my puppy stands at the edge of the seat of the car, staring at the ground, refusing to move.

Each and every time I write and subsequently release my words, it feels like a cliff jump. I stand at the edge and hit send, and then proceed to forget myself on the way down. The words have lost all meaning as soon as they meet the page. It’s no longer my story; it belongs to the world now. Until someone reads it and decides to gift me with their perceptions. As soon as I hear, “I read your piece,” I feel my heart clench, braced for what comes next. My body tightens as I wait for the inevitable, “You seem honest. You seem introspective,” and a whole slew of “You seems,” when really all they see is themselves in a reflection of my empty words.

“Your drawing makes me feel sad.” And I remind myself, yet again, that I cannot control anyone else’s feelings.

“What inspired this piece?” he asked, and, caught off guard, I deflected his question as I rambled about all the other paintings I had drawn. The ones I felt more comfortable discussing. In the moment, I was too afraid to tell the truth; it was inspired by a breakup. It was inspired by the moment I stood in the middle of the road and realized that I was hurting everyone around me and no matter what I did, I was only going to hurt people. I was hurting someone I loved like a brother but not a lover, I was hurting my friends by talking about it and not doing anything and I was hurting my family by allowing them to get involved, and I was hurting myself. Someone had handed me his heart, freely, on an open palm, and I had slaughtered it. Albeit unintentionally, but nevertheless, I was horrified to realize that I am capable of that. I know it means I am capable of causing even more hurt.

It is impossible to be in relationship, to be an active participant in the world, without both experiencing and causing hurt. Courage lies in facing the hurt and letting it pass. It’s in staying open regardless. There is truth to Henry Matisse’s words, “Creativity takes courage.” Because life and art are not separate and life is, in its very essence, a creative act, *life* takes

*Life and art are not separate and life is,
in its very essence, a creative act, life
takes courage.*

courage. And I wouldn't have it any other way. A life lived with courage is expansive. Yes, it opens us to large feelings, but these feelings exist on a whole spectrum of hurt and love. And in choosing to live, unafraid of the hurt we may experience or cause or both, we live, courageously facing the potential of a greater love, too. We grow in our ability to *feel*, and consequently, to love. Feeling and love live side by side and intertwined with courage. Courage creates room for love, and love guides courage into being.

BRETTON KEATING is a yoga instructor for adults and children, barre instructor, Reiki healer, writer, and artist. For her heart-centered writings, please visit her blog (brettonkeating.com). For creative work, including poetry and your fairy tale within, here is her website (whitecottonrose.com).





*Courage creates room for love, and
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The Authors

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MARTIN FERDINANDS climbs trees, practices yoga, meditates and writes in his journal. When he is not doing any of those, he reads and translates texts from various Asian spiritual traditions as part of his graduate studies. So far, none of his creative writing has been published, except for a Dutch piece ([found here](#)).

MOUNA BOUSLOUK is a consultant and coach. She empowers entrepreneurs in/with technology using her technical skills and her intuition. She loves writing, reading, watching flowers bloom and walking in the forest. Her motto : “All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today” Indian Proverb. Website: mounabouslouk.com

PATRICIA L. ATCHISON shares a love of writing, dancing Nia (Holistic Fitness), and making doll and teddy bear creations. Her children’s books, Little Blue Penguin and McKenzie’s Frosty Surprise have delighted many youngsters. She blogs and thinks of new books to write while living passionately.

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SKYLER MECHELLE WEINBERG After enduring over 17 years of incest, physical violence, and sex trafficking through and by her immediate family, Skyler escaped at the age of 18 and has and has since sought to redefine what it means to live life after abuse. She has built a movement that not only seeks to educate and destigmatise a very prevalent issue in our society, but refine and modify the support that is already in place. Focusing heavily on the systemic oppression, racism, ableism, and segregation that further impacts the poor trauma after care and mental health fields globally, she has set out to break the silence and reform abuse care by believing all survivors.

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TABITHA MACGOWAN is an author, autism parent, and advocate of acceptance, compassion, and love. She delights in life's quirks, belly laughs, smiles that light up, epiphanies, meditating, snuggling under her favorite quilt, campfires, coffee, and stargazing with her son in the early morning.

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