

Courageously You

We've all read stories about people acting with selfless courage to save another person's life: A firefighter who rescues a small child from a burning building, an elderly woman who single-handedly lifts an automobile to free her grandchild, a person who jumps in front of a moving car to push a stranger out of danger. We've probably applauded those heroic acts and questioned whether or not we would be able to rise to the occasion if called upon to do so. We may even have questioned the heroes' motives. Why did they do it? Did they think about all the publicity or the reward? Was it a hoax? Courageous acts often elicit mixed emotions. They're out of the ordinary, unexpected, scary, and therefore suspect.

But courage isn't just about spectacular events like rescuing people from life-threatening situations. In fact, most of us will never be called upon to respond with such super-human action. Our personal experiences with courage will probably be associated with the everyday events in life. They won't be that glamorous and more likely than not, they won't get written up in the papers. That's not to say that they will go unnoticed. People close to us will see our acts of courage. Some will be impressed and applaud our actions and others may be threatened or mistrust what they see.

Recently I heard someone say, "It's hard to be brave every day." I agree because I think it's hard to be true to ourselves and what we believe in, every day. It may require us to speak up

by Linda Tarrant



when we hear a lie or to keep a positive perspective when surrounded by negativism. It may be about being different and not going along with the crowd or being willing to risk receiving negative consequences if others don't like our actions. It's certainly about being courageously ourselves, even when others don't like it.

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I am a professional speaker. (Why do I feel like I should be attending regular meetings with others who are all confessing to the same disorder?) I want to be excellent at my job, so I listen to great speakers and try to learn from them. But sometimes I wonder whether I'm learning how to be a more effective me or whether I'm just beginning to look and sound more like them. It's so much scarier to just be me. I'm just a kid from Kentucky and always will be. Yes, there's a ham inside the girl and you'll probably see it. But I want my

message to be filled with truth and humour, not just show. I'm not exactly sure what "me" is yet, but I know that if I listen really carefully, "me" will come through. I hope I'll have the courage to accept the challenge of being me as I unfold. I know there will be a risk.

Being courageous isn't an intellectual exercise. It may not even be a conscious decision. It's almost as if it happens at a cellular level. We act and then later give reasons for why we did what we did. It's often after the fact that we feel fear or experience an emotional reaction to a situation that required courageous action. It's probably good that our rational mind doesn't determine all our actions. If it did, we might never act courageously (or have any fun, for that matter).

Even though most of us will never be called upon to save someone's life, we are constantly being given opportunities to act courageously. I believe the greatest opportunity you will ever be offered is to be courageously you. And what you do with that opportunity will make a significant difference to the rest of your life.

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