

20 Acts of Courage

There is no small act of courage. You can't compare the courage it takes to battle cancer with the courage it takes to become a doctor. Both are very brave acts.

You can't compare the courage it takes to become an Olympian with the courage it takes to raise a physically or mentally challenged child. Both are incredible feats.

You can't compare a firefighter who saves a life to an eight year old child who consistently stands up to a bully. Both acts are heroic.

Most of us don't think of ourselves as brave people. Yet that's exactly who we are. If you reflect on your life, one decade at a time, and write down your bravery, I'm sure you'd be surprised.

I think every brave thing we do in life counts. It's time we claim our bold and audacious selves.

It's time to celebrate our fearlessness. As we do, we can begin to think of ourselves as bold people who are sometimes fearless instead of fear-filled people who try to be bold.

Everyday acts of courage to practice and celebrate:

1. Apologize

It takes courage to admit when you are wrong. It's a bold act to admit when you make a mistake. Tell the other person what you did wrong and how you'll change your behavior so it doesn't happen again. Apologizing takes you out of your comfort zone and enhances your relationships.

That's big.

Fill in the blanks:

I apologize for _____.
I will change my behavior by _____
so it doesn't happen again.

2. Be yourself

Don't imitate anyone. Take off your mask. Allow yourself to become vulnerable. Share your flaws with others. See perfection in your imperfections. Who you are is a gift to the world. Allow yourself to shine.

Write down the last three times you acted inauthentically:

3. Take responsibility

You are where you are in life because of the choices you make. If you don't like what you see, change it. One question I ask myself often is, "Is this the life I want to create?" If you don't exercise, make a change. If you need to get out of debt, spend less. Responsibility brings freedom.

Three changes I need to make in my life are:

Commit to making one of the changes above. Take small penguin steps towards a new habit. All real change is slow. Soon you'll be leaping.

4. Keep your commitments

Write down everything you say you are going to do. Write down the promises you make to others. When you keep your promises, you build self-respect. Others respect you as well.

One promise I've made to myself that I haven't kept is:

I haven't kept it because

Three ways this holds me back are:

5. Rock the boat

Speak up. Make a difference. Share your feelings when you witness an injustice. Practice sharing your opinion. Don't allow someone to take advantage of you. Learn to say, "no." Refuse to hold back when your gut says to move forward.

One topic I can speak up about is:

I will speak to _____ about it by _____
(fill in date).

6. Let go of the past

Stop wallowing over what could have been. Forgive yourself. Forgive your parents. Forgive everyone. What happened is over unless you keep it alive by reliving it in your mind. When we know better, we do better. It takes courage to move on.

I will forgive myself for _____.
I will forgive _____ for _____.
I will forgive _____ for _____.
Get the help or support you need to do so.

7. Grow

Learn something new. Step into the unknown. Change the way you do things. It doesn't matter if you get it the first time. Try again. Give yourself permission to be a beginner. Seize the opportunity. Growth brings new opportunities.

One thing I've always wanted to learn is

One hobby I enjoy is _____.
One risk I am _____.

8. Listen

Listen to people who disagree with you. Listen to family members who think you are wrong. Listen to the elderly person in the coffee shop. Listen when you only want to

Speak and give advice. Listen and thank the other person for sharing.

It's especially difficult for me to listen to _____.
I am a better listener when I don't judge others for _____
_____.

9. Help others

Help someone who never helps you. Help others when you don't have the time. Help someone who can't pay you back. Help someone when you need help the most. Learn to be of service. That's why we're here.

Two people I'm willing to help are _____ and _____.

10. Love

Turn the other cheek. Overlook annoyances. Be kind to each other. Be truthful. Accept differences. Love is a verb. Spend time together. Act like a loving person. You can love difficult people from a distance. Bless them and wish them the best. Let them go with love.

I can put more love into my relationships with _____
by doing _____
more often.

11. Practice gratitude

Count your blessings. Tell the people in your life "thank you." Be grateful for the people you love and for the people who love you.

List your blessings below:

12. Choose to be happy

Make a decision to think happy thoughts, speak kind words and spend time doing things that bring you joy. Have a good attitude. See the glass half full. Look on the bright side. Expect the best. Choose to focus on what's good.

List three ways you can improve your attitude:

13. Learn from your mistakes

Reflect on what went wrong in the past week and what you could have done better. Look for your lesson. Choose to grow forward. Be gentle with yourself. Make a new plan. Try again. Refuse to give up.

Write about the biggest mistake you've made in the past week and what you learned from it:

14. Relax

In our intense and fast paced world, it's easy to feel like you're missing out or being left behind. You do too much, work too much and miss the joy of everyday living. It's bold to step back, take a break and relax.

Three ways I can choose to relax are:

15. Follow your dreams

Take action daily toward your goals. Ask for help. Network. Research. Plan. Take more action. Adjust your plans as you go along. Be open to something even better. Never give up. Adjust. Push on.

Three actions I will take to move closer to my dreams are:

16. Enjoy the small things

Take time to revel in a flower blooming, the taste of a cold glass of water, the different shades of green, a child's smile or an elderly person's worn hands. Enjoy the smell of clean clothes and the taste of a fresh slice of bread. Enjoy a brisk walk, a quiet morning or a star filled night.

Three small delights I often overlook are:

17. Go the extra mile

Allow someone to go in front of you in traffic or at the grocery store. Do more than what is required of you at work and at home. Hold a door open. Surprise someone. Don't keep score. Leave a big tip. Help someone believe the world is a generous place.

Three ways I can go the extra mile:

18. Ask for help

When you are stuck, addicted or unhappy, seek professional help. Hire a coach, a therapist or join a support group. When you are overwhelmed at work, ask for assistance. When you don't understand something, ask for an explanation.

List three situations where you need help. Write down the names of who you will ask:

19. Put family and friends before stuff

If you value your loved ones, make them a priority in your life. Work less and play more. Laugh. Create traditions and rituals. Find hobbies and activities that everyone enjoys. Have fun. Experiences bring more meaning than needless shopping.

List three ways you can spend more time with family or friends:

20. Love Yourself

Accept your imperfections. Be your own best friend. Show yourself compassion, understanding and respect. This is the most courageous act of all.

Two ways I can be more compassionate with myself are:

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Her personal and professional mission is to better the world by offering private, one-on-one courage coaching as well as interactive and home-study courses and products that will help others face their fears, unearth their bold, pursue their dreams and create meaningful and love-filled lives.

Tess has a master's degree in counseling psychology but proclaims her real knowledge and wisdom is from experiencing life with her heart wide open. Her biggest teachers have been her husband of 41 years, her four daughters and their families. Her biggest lesson is to love unconditionally.