

Courage Is Born When You Have No Hard Goal To Become "Someone Else"

By Abigail Tamsi

"There's a part of every living thing that wants to become itself, the tadpole into the frog, the chrysalis into the butterfly, a damaged human being into a whole one. That is spirituality."

~ Ellen Bass

If you ever feel like your life is not a reflection of who you truly are, you are not alone. In this modern day, we women take on many hats.

We are mothers. We are wives. We are sisters. We are friends. We are daughters. We are career women. We are business owners. We are most of these or we are all of these. And still, we are expected to be the "light of the family."

It is not uncommon to eventually find ourselves in middle age looking at the mirror and not recognising who we are. We ask ourselves, "What happened to that young woman who had the whole world ahead of her, full of enthusiasm and hope for a bright future? How did she get to this place where she could not feel joy even if her life looks so perfect?"

We've ticked all the boxes of having a family and a career but we still do not feel fulfilled. There's just something that is missing.

We're afraid to shake things up in our lives. We're afraid to admit we are discontented. We're afraid to lose everything. But we are more afraid of not stepping into our true selves. The emotional pain of not being our true selves is greater

than all of our other fears.

Most of us do not come to this realisation until we find ourselves constantly depressed, struggling with a chronic illness, having a hard time keeping up with a life we do not seem to have control of, or has been shaken up by either a relationship ending or the death of a beloved. We wake up one day and ask ourselves if this life we are living is really what we want.

But how do we get out of this rut? What do we need to do in order to move from feeling this small, from feeling out of control, from feeling defeated to living in our authenticity, living with joy in our hearts and living a life that fulfils us?

I say “we” because I’ve been there. I’ll be honest and say as well that there are still parts of my life where I feel stuck and where more of my true self would like to express herself so that I may live authentically.

Seeking to crawl my way out of a murky places of being and realising for myself that this is not going to work, I found that there are four keys that helped me move forward albeit slowly.

These four keys are Acceptance, Compassion, Awareness, and Curiosity.

Acceptance

Once I found myself awake to my current circumstances, I realised that the very first thing I needed to do was accept where I am. I would not be helping myself if I kept on choosing to ignore what was happening, if I kept on wishing that someday it will all be better, if I kept on hanging on to the pain, if I kept on using it as an excuse, if I kept on berating myself for being where I am, or if I pigeonholed myself by saying “This is my lot in life.” None of these

mindsets can really support me. They will only serve to dig me into a deeper hole.

Acceptance is not always easy to undertake, especially when we are experiencing emotional trauma. Practices of self-forgiveness are key during this stage, wherein we recognise that we have always been doing the best we can with the resources that we have. When we self-forgive, we give ourselves a chance to heal.

Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estes in her book [Women Who Run with the Wolves](#) defines four stages of forgiveness:

1. to forego – to leave it alone
2. to forebear – to abstain from punishing
3. to forget – to aver from memory, to refuse to dwell
4. to forgive – to abandon the debt”

“How does one know if she has forgiven? You tend to feel sorrow over the circumstance instead of rage, you tend to feel sorry for the person rather than angry with him. You tend to have nothing left to remember to say about it all. You understand the suffering that drove the offense to begin with. You prefer to remain outside the milieu. You are not waiting for anything. You are not wanting anything. There is no lariat snare around your ankle stretching from way back there to here. You are free to go. It may not have turned out to be a happily ever after, but most certainly there is now a fresh Once upon a time waiting for you from this day forward.”

~ Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estes

If we were to revert that to ourselves and see when we have learned from our experience, we allow ourselves the possibility of experiencing inner peace and a chance to grow. “You are free to go” for me means, “You are free to BE.”

Compassion

When we go on this journey of personal growth we need to look after “number 1,” i.e. our selves. We may unearth and become conscious of a lot of areas about ourselves that were previously hidden to us. Some of these parts may not be to our liking. Some may surprise us. Some may be hard to accept.

Because this is a personal journey, we also need to be compassionate to ourselves. Without compassion, it can be much harder to move along. Without compassion, there can be no forgiveness.

What does it mean to be self-compassionate? Christine Arylo, in her book, [Madly in Love with ME](#), defined Self-Compassion and Self-Forgiveness as, “The choice to open your heart and be a loving witness to yourself, without judgment, by sending yourself waves of kindness, understanding, and forgiveness that touch, heal, and transform your imperfections, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and humanness through the presence of your unconditional love.”

The vital thing to remember is that we deserve compassion no matter who we are, what we do or have done, or what our past or present is like. Every person on this planet deserves this love.

Love is born from within us and we can direct it to ourselves, especially during these times when we would like to rise and be in a different state from where we are now.

Awareness

Most of the time, we become aware of how we live, breathe, talk, move and be in this world with what is presented to us by our daily experiences or by the feedback that we receive from the people we interact with. Being aware of ALL of our natural tendencies is not innate. This is because we have been

so used to who we are that it has become a conditioned way of being.

But until we realise that what we are saying, doing and being is not working for us anymore, it becomes difficult to move towards the change we desire in ourselves and in our lives.

This is where I found the practice of meditation to be an important tool to bring about awareness day-to-day. Brefczynski-Lewis JA et al, 2007 scientific study defined meditation as, "... a family of mental training practices that are designed to familiarize the practitioner with specific types of mental processes."

As a start, meditation helps us to be more mindful. Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness teacher and author of many books on mindfulness, defines mindfulness as, "The awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally."

When we train ourselves with this kind of awareness practice, we lead ourselves towards more paths for change. Awareness is key when we go through our process of self-forgiveness, particularly in what we say to ourselves and how we react to our current circumstances.

We need to be aware it, before we can change it.

Curiosity

In Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness, I found that the most potent part of it is being able to do it non-judgmentally. I like to frame it differently and view my experience with curiosity.

Curiosity is defined as "the desire to learn or know about anything; inquisitiveness." In the realm of personal development and awareness, being curious means being in a

state of wonder and having a beginner's mind. Curiosity is when we allow ourselves to learn why we are the way we are or how we behave, without any self-condemnation or any hard goal to become "someone else."

I know this may sound counter-intuitive because we are hoping to live from a better state of being. But with a true sense of curiosity, we can open ourselves up to more and different perspectives that we otherwise would not be able to embrace.

Where Courage is Born

I found that these four keys, Acceptance, Compassion, Awareness and Curiosity, all weave together with each other and support our growth.

We need compassion for ourselves when we are choosing to accept our current circumstances. As we become more awake and aware, our curiosity helps open new doors in our psyche that we may otherwise not be able to see.

Our acceptance and awareness of ourselves then expands our way of being so that it can provide space for us to take the next steps to better our lives. And with a felt sense of compassion for ourselves, we can feel supported from within.

It is from this space when and where Courage is born.

*"Courageous is the woman who recognises
that she needs to make a change to live the life she desires"
~ Abigail Tamsi*

[For more self-study, The Urban Howl recommends 52 Ways to Live a Kick-Ass Life: BS-Free Wisdom to Ignite Your Inner Badass and Live the Life You Deserve](#) .

Abigail's profile image: plumbelly-photography.com



Photo : @brenton_clarke {Instagram}

#BIRTHOFCOURAGE

HOWL WITH US
ON [FACEBOOK](#), [INSTAGRAM](#), [TWITTER](#) & [PINTEREST](#).

SPREAD THE MAGIC: