

Confidence & Courage Tips... To Help You Realize Your Dreams

By Ron Balagot (a.k.a. Gabriel Daniels)



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Run Freely (A Lesson About Courage)

By Ron Balagot

One afternoon, many years ago, I went to pick up my mother from work. I got there a little early so I parked the car by the curb, across the street from where she worked, and waited for her.

As I looked outside the car window to my right, there was a small park where I saw a little boy, around one and a half to two years old, running freely on the grass as his mother watched from a short distance. The boy had a big smile on his face as if he had just been set free from some sort of prison. The boy would then fall to the grass, get up, and without hesitation or without looking back at his mother, run as fast as he could, again, still with a smile on his face, *as if nothing had happened.*

At that moment, I thought to myself, "*Why aren't most adults this way?*" Most adults, when they fall down (*figuratively speaking*), make a big deal out of it and don't even make a second attempt. They would be so embarrassed that someone saw them fall that they would not try again. Or, because they fell, they would justify to themselves that they're just not cut out for it. They would end up too afraid to attempt again for fear of failure.

However, with kids (especially at an early age), when they fall down, they don't perceive their falling down as failure, but instead, **they treat it as a learning experience (as just another result/outcome)**. They feel compelled to try and try again until they succeed. (The answer must be...they have not associated "falling down" with the word "failure" yet. Thus, they don't know how to feel the state which accompanies failure. As a result, they are not disempowered in any way. Plus, they probably think to themselves that it's perfectly okay to fall down, that it's not wrong to do so. In other words, **they give themselves permission to make mistakes**, subconsciously. Thus, they remain empowered.)

While I was touched by the boy's persistence, *I was equally touched by the manner in which he ran.* With each attempt, he looked so confident...so natural. No signs of fear, nervousness, or of being discouraged—as if he didn't give a care about the world around him. His only aim was to run freely and to do it as effectively as he could. *He was just being a child—just being himself—being completely in the*

moment. He was not looking for approval or was not worrying about whether someone was watching or not. He wasn't concerned about being judged. He didn't seem to be bothered by the fact that maybe someone would see him fall (as there were others in the park aside from him and his mother) and that it would be embarrassing if he did fall. No, all that mattered to him was to accomplish the task or activity at hand to the best of his ability. To run...and to feel the experience of running fully and freely.

I learned a lot from that observation and experience, and have successfully brought that lesson with me in my many pursuits in life. Since then, I've always believed that **in each of us is a little child with absolute courage.** A child that has the ability to run freely (or express himself fully and freely)—without a care for anything external—without a care for what people would say if he/she experiences a fall.

I believe that that courageous part of us, that courageous child within us all, will always be with us for as long as we live. **We only need to allow it to emerge more fully. We only need to once again connect with that child within us—and give that child permission to run freely, just like that boy in the park.**

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*Find yourself,
for courage and confidence
are as easy as breathing
to the person who really knows
who he is.*

~ Vernon Howard ~

How To Be Confident And Relaxed When Speaking Before A Group Of People (Powerful Tips To Help You Become A Highly Effective Speaker/Presenter)

By Ron Balagot

1. Prepare thoroughly.

Prepare the message of your speech thoroughly. Know exactly what it is you want to bring across to your audience...and why. Knowing the *purpose* of your speech will help focus and organize your thoughts, thus allowing you to be relaxed when it comes time to make your presentation.

In addition, others find it helpful to rehearse their presentation “physically” (or aloud—as if they were actually giving out a presentation...the only difference is, they are speaking to an imaginary audience) before their presentation. While others prefer to rehearse “mentally” (visualization exercises). In fact, most or all *peak performers* (from speakers to athletes...you name it) perform visualization exercises before their actual performance. (This could mean days, weeks, months, or even years in advance depending on the type of performance—and these exercises are usually done on a daily or regular basis.) Use what works for you.

(For those who are not too familiar with the term *visualization*, which is sometimes called *mental imagery* or *mental rehearsal*, basically, what you do is you imagine in your mind's eye the kind of performance you would like to give...with as much detail as possible...and also, the kind of end result you would like from your performance. And it can be done with your eyes open or closed.

Note: Visualization exercises are much more effective and powerful when done in what is called “associated” mode [meaning, you are seeing your surroundings from inside your own body—for example, imagining the audience in front of you...imagining how receptive they are...while you are feeling confident and relaxed where you're

standing...and so on—and not watching yourself from a distance]...and with lots of intense and positive feelings. Even better when you can include as many of your five senses as possible in your visualizations.)

Of course, prepare what you're going to wear, as well as, the materials (ex. visual aids) you plan to use in your presentation. Also, if you need to get directions on how to get to the venue where you'll be speaking, do this way ahead of time. That way, you will not feel rushed at the last minute.

The more prepared you are overall, the more relaxed you will be before and during your presentation.

(Of course, if it's going to be impromptu or extemporaneous speaking, then just do your best to organize your thoughts as quickly as you can with whatever time you're given. Focus on your purpose for speaking. Ask yourself, "*What's the message I want to convey? Why do I want to convey this message?*" And stay relaxed as much as possible. You'll learn more about how to do this in the information that follows.)

2. Wear something appropriate and comfortable for the occasion.

When you look good (or *when you know* you look good), you tend to feel good. When you are less self-conscious, you tend to be more at ease. Whether we admit it or not, the way we look somehow affects the way we feel.

Of course, don't forget proper grooming.

3. Be convinced that what you have to say matters.

Be convinced of the importance of your message. Doing this will put you at ease and will make you appear more confident (and above all, congruent).

In fact, do your best to speak only about things/topics you truly believe in or are passionate about. Your conviction and passion will naturally shine through (and applying *Principle #9* below will help even more). This will make you much more credible to your audience. Remember, *your listeners will only believe you if they first sense that you believe in what you are saying.*

4. Put yourself in a "confident" state.

There are many ways to do this. One of the best ways that I've found is to "act as if" you were already confident (that's if you feel you're not quite in the "confident" state yet). Walk and talk the way you would if you were already extremely confident.

Sometimes, it helps to ask yourself the following questions:

"How would I feel right now if I were absolutely confident?"

"How would I breathe?"

"How would I stand?"

"How would I walk?"

"How would I talk?"

...and so on.

Another excellent way would be for you to imagine a time in the past when you were completely confident...then bring that state to the present moment...and speak/present while in that state.

Ask yourself the following:

"When, in the past, was I absolutely confident?"

"How did I breathe?"

"How did I stand?"

"How did I walk?"

"How did I talk?"

...and so on.

(It's very important that when you ask these questions, and when you do these visualizations, you are not imagining yourself outside your body as if you were watching yourself as an actor/actress on a movie screen. You must be in your body...seeing things in the outside world from inside your own body.)

Also, when asking the last few questions (while imagining a past confident state you were in), all you need to do is imagine a time when you were absolutely confident...and it doesn't matter what you were doing at the time, as long as you were absolutely confident. It does not have to be a past speaking situation...although if you could remember a time, that would be great. *(Your main goal is to bring that past, empowering state into the present moment so that you will be in an empowered state to perform at your peak in the present moment.)*

5. Keep your attention/focus away from yourself...at all costs.

In other words, avoid being self-conscious at all costs...because self-consciousness is one of the biggest causes of nervousness. Focus instead on the message you want to bring across to your audience. Focus on why you are there....why you are speaking to them.

Also, avoid or interrupt any negative or disempowering internal dialogue. Immediately interrupt the pattern when you hear the negative voice inside of you saying things like: *"Oh-oh! They're all looking at you...checking you out...measuring you up...judging you...blah-blah-blah."* Come up with an effective way to stop that negative voice in its tracks.

Sometimes, just ignoring it and immediately changing your focus works. At times, it may help to internally yell, "*STOP!*" or, "*STOP IT!*" ...and then immediately change focus. The key is to interrupt the pattern as soon as you catch it. Don't give the monster a chance to grow. Avoid giving it any power over you. Squash it while it's little. Then change your focus immediately.

By the way, I'm curious. I don't know if this has ever happened to you, but it's happened to me quite a few times when I was in my teens. You're just walking along, naturally, without a care in the world, and then someone comes along...someone you admire/like appears out of nowhere...and then you lose your "natural walking rhythm" or the way you walk feels out of sync (a very awkward feeling), all because, all of a sudden, you place your focus on yourself (or you become self-conscious). Has this ever happened to you?

Well, what I eventually learned later on was that, unconsciously, I was saying to myself, "*Oh boy, I better walk nicely because I want to give her the impression that I'm cool.*" In other words, instead of just expressing the natural me, allowing the natural me to just shine through, thus allowing the way I walk to be natural, I ended up *putting on a performance/show* (because I was trying to prove something or trying to gain approval), and that negatively affected my *natural* walking rhythm.

6. Breathe naturally and in a relaxed manner.

In the beginning, you may need to monitor your breathing once in a while to make sure you are breathing naturally—and in a relaxed manner. (I say this because there are probably a lot of people out there who are not even aware of their breathing patterns...especially when under pressure...or when the heat is on. Besides, it only takes a second or two.)

You can usually tell if you're not breathing naturally, because when you are nervous, your stomach muscles either tend to tense up unnecessarily, or your breathing tends to be shallow/fast...or both.

And as a result, you feel uncomfortable—which is a disempowering state. And that's not beneficial to your performance.

After a while, though, you won't have to monitor your breathing as much. In fact, as time goes by, you will get used to breathing naturally—and in a relaxed manner—even under pressure.

In the beginning, it will help a lot if you could make a comparison between the way you breathe when you're relaxed and the way you breathe when you're tense or nervous. Be aware of the difference. (Meaning, whenever you catch yourself being tense or nervous, with your heart beating fast and everything, be aware of the way you breathe...then do the same when you catch yourself in a relaxed mood...for example, while talking to relatives or close friends—people you are already very comfortable with.) Once you are more aware of the difference, you will naturally use what is more beneficial to you, more often, and unconsciously.

(*Note:* Although, in the previous section, I suggested not to be self-conscious, this awareness of your breathing patterns will not violate that principle. Remember, you will merely be doing this in the beginning until such time when you no longer need to do it as often...or at all. And when you do put your awareness on your breathing in the beginning, it's best to do it during a period of inactivity...ex. a pause between phrases or between making a point. If you feel you're *in the flow* while making a presentation, then you don't really need to monitor/check your breathing anymore. It means you're doing fine. Just move on with your presentation.)

7. Speak as if you were speaking to a close friend or loved one (in a conversational manner).

Look at individuals in your audience, eye to eye...as if you were conversing with them individually (as if you were sitting across the table/room from them). Talk directly to one person for a few seconds, then move on to someone else...and keep repeating this. In fact, when you do this, you will feel more relaxed because you will feel like you are talking to individuals (just like in a conversation) and not to a "group" of people. And not only will you appear very confident and relaxed, your audience will automatically feel comfortable and relaxed.

As a result, they will be more receptive to your message. (Remember, confidence and being comfortable are contagious.)

(An excellent book that covers this principle more thoroughly is entitled *You Are The Message* by Roger Ailes. I highly recommend that you find a way to access it and read it. In fact, you can always try your local library, first, if they have it. That way, you won't have to spend anything. Another excellent book that is closely related, which I highly recommend you read, is entitled *You've Got To Be Believed To Be Heard: Reach The First Brain To Communicate In Business And In Life* by Bert Decker.)

8. Always remind yourself that it's okay to make mistakes.

Give yourself permission to make mistakes. It's perfectly okay. You're only human. Even the highest achievers in the world make them. In fact, everybody makes them. (Make the decision ahead of time, before speaking in front of any group, that you will allow yourself to make mistakes...to look awkward or foolish.)

Basically, what I'm suggesting is that you go out there and do your best, or give your all, while at the same time, know that you are willing to forgive yourself (and willing to continue to accept yourself) whatever the outcome may be. It does not make you a bad person or a fool if you make mistakes unintentionally. (If you do it intentionally, then that's a different story. Besides, who in their right mind would "plan" to make mistakes in advance?) Learn from your mistakes, then move on.

By giving yourself permission this way, you will become more relaxed. Why? Because what creates tension, stress, or nervousness in the first place is when a part of you is saying, "*You must be perfect. You must do this perfectly. You can't screw up no matter what happens or else people will see you as a failure.*" While another part of you just wants to naturally go with the flow...not giving a care for anything. This kind of inner conflict (between the different parts of you) is what causes tension, stress, or nervousness.

9. Express yourself fully and freely...with your whole being.

Let your conviction, enthusiasm, and passion show. Unleash them fully and freely. And let it be felt by your audience. (If it helps, you can imagine rays of light emanating from you, penetrating each of your audience members.) Avoid holding back. *Just let go.* When you do this, you will naturally become more confident.

When you are speaking *from your very core*, just allowing your *natural feelings* to flow outward, for some reason, you tend to forget about fear or nervousness. And doing this usually results in *peak performances* (being in the “flow”).

10. Be completely in the present moment—in the here and now.

While you are speaking, keep your thoughts away from the past or future (since focusing on the past or future can create anxiety through the pouring in of negative thoughts—ex. negative experiences associated with the past, or, the negative consequences that could possibly arise in the future). Also, avoid thinking about the outcome, as well as, your expectations of the outcome during your speech. Simply *flow*. Immerse yourself completely in what you are doing (in this case, speaking) in the present moment. This will help you greatly in performing at your peak. In fact, this is another quality possessed by peak performers.

11. Avoid the need to gain approval.

What do I mean by this? Because others might say, *“Well, Ron, what if I am trying to persuade the audience to accept my point of view, am I not trying to gain their approval?”*

My answer would be, *“Yes, naturally, that would be your ultimate goal if you were trying to persuade others.”* Your desired outcome would, of course, be for them to accept your argument because it will benefit both you and them in some way.

But I’m talking more about your mental attitude or mindset while you are speaking—which in turn affects your physiological state.

The mindset that says, *“It’s okay if he/she rejects my argument. That’s his/her right. At least, I did my best to persuade him/her.”*

Or, the mindset that says: *"I accept the fact that not everyone will be persuaded to my point of view, and that's okay. At least, I did what I could."*

When you are focused on trying to impress others (because of your need to gain approval), you will end up saying or doing things you really don't want to say or do (in other words, it will cause you to do things against your will) and this is what causes stress/anxiety. You will feel like you are betraying yourself (or going against what you believe to be true). And you'll end up regretting it later.

What creates stress/anxiety is when your inner voice is saying, *"I must do this, or I must say this...or else they will think negatively of me."*

Whatever you do, avoid going into a speaking situation with the following attitude or mindset: *"Please accept me. Please accept my ideas. I won't be able to handle it if you don't. I'll feel like a failure if you reject me or my ideas."* Because if you possess that kind of attitude, even if you don't say those words outright, your audience will sense your lack of confidence (both in yourself and in your ideas) and your lack of self-esteem. You'll end up sabotaging your own efforts...and your performance will suffer...thus, you will not be effective in fulfilling your objective of persuading your audience.

Instead, your attitude should be more like: *"I have something very valuable to offer you that I believe will highly benefit you. This is what you'll gain/benefit if you accept my offer. And this is what you'll lose out on (or this is the pain you'll continue to experience) if you don't. The decision to accept or reject my offer is completely up to you. That is your right. And I'll respect your decision. As for me, I'll lose nothing if you reject my offer."*

In other words, it is you who carries the key to the treasure chest. Since you are the one who has something valuable and beneficial to offer your audience, *you shouldn't appear like you're begging for approval.*

Besides, you need to be honest with yourself and accept the fact that you will not always win everyone to your point of view (consider yourself fortunate if you are able to do so). Of course, you would still do whatever it takes to try and persuade each audience member (if the objective of your presentation is to persuade), but realize that it's perfectly okay if you don't. The ones who accept your message, or are moved by your message, are the ones destined to benefit. Don't worry about the rest who don't (in other words, don't make it a problem—don't let it bother you). Maybe your message wasn't meant for them. Or the time is not right for them to receive it. Maybe they'll be persuaded in the future when their circumstances change and they remember your speech. Who knows? Whatever the case may be, simply accept the outcome and move on.

Basically, you ought to be like a good teacher who tells his/her students what they need to hear, and not what they want to hear...and you would do it with the understanding that they're free to walk away or reject your argument if that is what they choose to do.

12. Trust in the power of your mind (more specifically, your subconscious mind). Trust that it will deliver the right words at the right time.

Reinforce in your being the belief that your mind will deliver the right words at the right time. Meaning, if you are speaking without the aid of a written script (where something is read verbatim or word-for-word), like some do (others, like myself, prefer to just write down key words in logical progression to serve as reminders), avoid worrying about what you're going to say next. If you know your topic really well, **your subconscious mind will produce the right words at the right time** (especially if you went over the content of your speech many times prior to your presentation)...**if you will only allow it...if you will only trust it.** But you must be in the right state for this to work effectively.

You must be in a relaxed, confident, and “trusting” state. A state where you “just know” that the words will come. (Of course, it helps greatly if you are speaking about a topic you are passionate about.)

You must trust in your mind’s ability to deliver. The more you do this, the more your mind will automatically deliver when you need it to. *For some reason, the subconscious mind likes to be trusted. The more you trust it, the more it wants to be worthy of that trust.* In other words, it will find ways to justify that you are right in trusting it. And if you don’t trust it, it will also find ways to justify that you are right in not trusting it.

Actually, there may be times when your mind just goes blank (for a second or two), for some reason, and you don’t remember the word/term you wish to use in a sentence. In a case like that, just stay relaxed and wait patiently. Just wait in a relaxed and expectant state...and eventually, the right word will come. (Whatever you do, avoid panicking. The more anxious you are, the harder it will be to remember the right word. Remember, the less you trust your mind, the less it will want to deliver.)

Besides, if you stay calm, most of the time, people won’t even notice that there’s something wrong. They’ll think it was just a normal pause, or you did it on purpose for effect. In other words, the flow of your presentation will move smoothly without interruption. And you will continue to be perceived as being “in charge” of the situation.

Remember this: The more you trust your mind, the more it will deliver. And the more your mind delivers, the more confident you will become in speaking situations.

13. Decide in advance to tell the truth no matter what.

Of course, this is nothing new. You already know that when you are telling the truth, you are much more relaxed or at ease. Why? Simply because what you say and what you believe to be true are in harmony. There’s no conflict within.

Whereas, when you are lying, there's that voice inside of you saying, "What if they can see through me and sense my dishonesty?" Or, "What if I'm ever found out?" (In fact, just "planning" to lie already makes one anxious or tense.) In other words, it puts you in a disempowering or unresourceful state. And it negatively affects your performance. Worse, you will lose your audience's trust once they sense you are not telling the truth (they will somehow sense it, subconsciously). And when that happens, it will be all over. Once your credibility goes, everything else goes.

14. Trust that you can handle whatever comes your way.

This must be one of the biggest and most important lessons I've learned about effective speaking/presenting. In fact, every great speaker/presenter does it, whether consciously or unconsciously.

If you'll only observe the most relaxed and effective speakers/presenters (ex. TV personalities or talk show hosts), you will find that they have this quality. They'll say or do the wrong things at times and they'll just simply laugh it off or make a joke out of it. And then they'll proceed as if nothing happened. They are able to consistently do this because they have simply learned to trust in their ability to handle whatever comes their way.

By mastering this principle, you can go very far as a speaker/presenter. In fact, if you happen to come short in other areas, but you have this quality, you'll be able to face any unexpected event with a sense of calm (while others would panic in the same situation). In fact, this does not only apply to speaking/presenting, but to life as a whole.

Basically, you are saying to yourself, "*No matter what happens, I know I can handle it. If I make a mistake, so what? It's not the end of the world. Besides, I permit myself to make mistakes. I'll learn from this experience and move on.*" (Remember: The meaning of any event is the meaning you give it. Also, nothing has any power over you except the power you give it.)

Or you might say, "*Whatever happens, I'll handle it. I've done it many times before, so I can do it again.*" (There must be numerous events in your life, in the past, wherein things did not turn out exactly as you expected—and I'm sure many of them were even events that made you feel devastated, hopeless, and helpless...as if it were the end of the world—but still you were able to eventually handle them.)

Again, master this principle...and you will go very far as a speaker/presenter. Above all, you will have the strength and courage to tackle anything in life.

(An excellent book that covers this principle more thoroughly is Susan Jeffers' best-selling book, *Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway*. I highly suggest that you go find a way to access it and read it. You'll benefit in many ways.)

15. Apply the "I don't care" or "It doesn't matter" attitude. (Or, the "So what?" or "Whatever happens, happens" attitude.)

This is another very powerful principle (and it's closely related to the previous one—*Principle #14*). In fact, don't take my word for it. Just like all the other principles in this article, apply it and discover just how powerful it is. And once you've benefited from it, use it more often. (Again, this principle applies to many situations in life and not only to speaking.)

Does this mean that you don't actually care about the outcome? Of course not. Otherwise, you wouldn't be wasting your time taking the steps leading to that desired outcome in the first place.

Just like what we've covered in some of the previous sections (ex. *Principle #12*), it is the "state" that results from these principles that you are after.

Basically, once you've determined your desired outcome, let it go. Surrender it completely to God. Think of something else. You have no

control over the outcome anyway, so just work on what you can control.

In other words, if there are any thoughts that are trying to scare or hinder you, by giving you negative pictures of what *could* happen, because of your decision to pursue a certain idea, just say, "*I don't care.*" (And "mean it"—like you really don't care.) Then immediately change focus.

What you are basically saying is, "*I don't care if that happens. I can handle it.*"

Or, "*It doesn't matter. I can handle it.*"

Or, "*So what? I'll handle it anyway.*"

Or, "*Whatever happens, happens. I'll handle it anyway.*"

When you do this, you are basically telling the negative voice inside you, "*Leave me alone. Stop wasting my time. You won't succeed in convincing me to stop pursuing what I want because I'm already certain that no matter what happens, I'll be able to handle it.*"

Basically, you are refusing to give the negative voice any power over you.

Again, your main goal in all of this is to access an empowering state so you can be highly effective in the present moment. And this mental attitude or mindset will help you access that type of state.

16. Speak as often as possible (while applying all the principles you've learned in this article).

Consciously seek ways to speak in front of others. Take advantage of every opportunity to express your thoughts to others (whether it be one-on-one or a group setting)—while applying the principles you've learned—and your confidence level will skyrocket. In fact, as time goes by, speaking in front of others will feel more and more comfortable

and natural to you.

With constant practice, you gain more mastery. And as you gain more mastery, your confidence grows.

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*Self-confidence gives you
the freedom to make mistakes
and cope with failure
without feeling that your world
has come to an end or
that you are a worthless person.*

~ Author Unknown ~

As is our confidence, so is our capacity.

~ William Hazlitt ~

*When you have faith and confidence
in yourself, you will do more
and attempt to do more.*

*~ Jack M. Zufelt,
Author of The DNA of Success ~*

12 Ways To Unleash The Courage Within

By Ron Balagot

What you are about to learn are very powerful ways to help you get from where you are to where you want to go. When you consistently apply the principles below, you will notice a dramatic and positive change in your life.

Before we move on, though, I'd like to explain why I use the word "unleash."

I am convinced that courage is already within us all and only needs to be "unleashed." There's a part of us that knows this—whether or not we readily admit it. We only need to accept this fact.

For many years, we have been taught by society, and sadly, even by our well-meaning relatives or friends, why we should not do something, or why we should not pursue a particular goal. They try to discourage us in a number of ways. Sometimes, it may not be that they don't believe in us or our ideas, but that they feel that if they were to pursue the idea/goal themselves, they wouldn't have the courage to do it—they would be too afraid.

In other words, they pass on their fears to us unconsciously (and unintentionally). Unfortunately, we end up making fewer attempts as a result. And the less we attempt to do something because of fear (the fears others programmed into us) the less our minds believe that courage is already within us. And the less our minds believe that courage is already within us, the more it becomes true (a reality) for us.

In my first article, **Run Freely (A Lesson About Courage)**, I shared with you an important lesson I learned, through observation, many years ago—and that is: *Courage has always been inside of us from the time we were children. (And since we were all children at one time, courage is inside "all" of us.)*

Courage is not something that comes from outside of us (although external factors or influences can help in drawing that courage out, or can help in getting us to be more in touch with that courage—and that's what I would like to share with you in the principles below),

because absolute courage (or fearlessness) is the very nature of our "spirit" (at least here in the physical world—I say "physical" because in the physical world, nothing can harm a spirit...and another reason I stress "physical" is because others may say, "*The devil is a spirit. Why, then, does the devil fear God?*").

I love the quote I read in one of Wayne Dyer's books years ago. (Wayne Dyer, by the way, is a highly recognized best-selling author and motivational speaker.) The quote was actually by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin...and it goes like this:

We are not human beings
having a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings
having a human experience.

I figured, that's probably why kids (especially those at an early age) are so courageous (and less self-conscious). They are more in touch with that "spirit" part of themselves.

In fact, I believe that through the years, as people grow up towards adulthood, they have gotten less and less in touch with that "spirit" part of themselves due to the many self-created (or imaginary) fears—or due to fears that have been passed on to them by others (or society). These fears started to gradually cover up their fearless nature—their very essence or core—just like mold gradually covers up a piece of fresh bread left out in the open.

Keeping the above in mind, here, then, are 12 ways (I'll cover more in future articles) to unleash the courage within:

1. Reinforce in your being the conviction that you are a "fearless" spirit in a physical body. It's your true nature. It's your very essence. Accept this fact and your life will change in positive ways.

Detach yourself from the fear of the body, and the mind,
clinging instead to the fearlessness of the spirit.

~ Chin-Ning Chu ~

It is in your power to discover that who you really are has nothing to fear, but that you make yourself fearful each time you look outside of yourself for some power to make you feel fearless.

~ *Vernon Howard* ~

2. Simply attempt. JUST DO IT. Avoid overanalyzing (which usually results in procrastination). Once you've decided to do something, just do it (avoid delaying unnecessarily).

Over time, this reinforces the feeling of courage in your nervous system. You'll be more and more in touch with the courageous part of yourself. And as a result, taking action (without hesitating) will feel more natural to you.

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.

~ *Seneca* ~

Do it like there's no one watching, do it like you don't need the money, do it like you just can't lose, JUST DO IT.

~ *Nike Ad* ~

In other words, do your best not to give fear (or excuses) a chance to creep in. Why? Because when that happens, the following is what normally results (as Seneca's quote explains):

A man who suffers before it is necessary suffers more than is necessary.

Also, as Publilius Syrus' quote explains:

Valor grows by daring, fear by holding back.

3. Give yourself permission to be courageous (avoid allowing yourself to be cowardly). And avoid giving others (or anything) permission to make you feel fearful. The key word here is "permission."

Understanding this principle and applying it in your daily life will empower you in ways you may not have imagined before. It puts you in a powerful position because it gives you control (in other words, you

won't be just a mindless punching bag to others). You are able to "consciously" decide whether or not someone will influence you in a negative way. As a result, you'll be more at ease in dealing with others, no matter who they are.

You see, the reason some people are bullied is because "they permit it." They give permission to the bully to bully them. But the moment they no longer give permission to the bully to mistreat them, the bully loses his/her power.

(There's an excellent section on this concept of "permission" in Gerry Spence's book, *How To Argue And Win Every Time*.)

No one can make you feel inferior without your permission.

~ Eleanor Roosevelt ~

Starting now, never again permit hard or disapproving facial expressions to intimidate you.

~ Vernon Howard ~

4. Reinforce the belief that the only power others have is the power you give them. Their power comes from you. In fact, it is your gift to them. Their power is merely "your perception" of their power (in other words, the source of their power is in your mind). And you have a choice at any moment how much power you will give them.

This very powerful principle can be applied to fears/anxieties you may have when dealing with others. As you regularly apply this principle, you'll be more at ease when dealing with anyone, even authority figures or influential people. Also, with this knowledge, it will be in your power to give "less" or "no" power to those who like to abuse it (ex. bullies or difficult people in general).

This empowers you, and reinforces your courage at the same time, because you are in a position to make a "conscious" decision (just like principle #3 above). People won't be able to abuse power because their power comes from you in the first place. At any moment, you can easily take back any power you've already given them..."just by deciding."

(Again, there's an excellent section/chapter on this principle in Gerry Spence's book, *How To Argue And Win Every Time*.)

No human being has any authority over you. Your life belongs to you and to you alone. No scowling face or irritated manner, no challenging posture or threatening tone has any power to make you feel nervous or anxious, frightened or angry. This is a fact; and anyone who is tired of letting someone else tell them how to feel can use this self-liberating principle to win true and lasting independence. Your true nature answers to no man.

~ Vernon Howard ~

No one can make you happy or sad or excited or angry unless you give them that power over your life. Decide right now to only give your power to those things, circumstances, and people that support you in getting what you want.

~ Marshall Sylver ~

Don't let the negativity given to you by the world disempower you. Instead give to yourself that which empowers you.

~ Les Brown ~

5. Reinforce the belief that the only power "anything" has is the power you give it. The power that events and experiences have over you will depend on the meaning you give them. (Two people can go through similar experiences but will respond in completely different ways, depending on what meaning they give those experiences.)

Again, just like principles 3 and 4 above, applying this principle will empower you because you will have the ability to make a "conscious" decision (it gives you the power of "choice"—you get to choose how you will perceive or interpret any event, experience, etc.).

Nothing has any power over me other than that which I give it through my conscious thoughts.

~ Anthony Robbins ~

If you are distressed by anything external,
the pain is not due to the thing itself
but to your own estimate of it; and this
you have the power to revoke at any moment.

~ Marcus Aurelius ~

Nothing has any power except the power that you give it.

~ *Marshall Sylver* ~

6. Apply the “calmness linked to fear” technique (a powerful technique that can help you remain calm in situations that would normally trigger fear/anxiety).

Imagine one of your biggest fears, whatever it is (a situation, a thing, a specific person, a type of person, etc.). Then imagine or visualize (in “associated” mode—meaning, you are seeing things in your surroundings from inside your own body...and not watching yourself as an actor on a movie screen) yourself being calm—being relaxed.

For example, if one of your biggest fears is having confrontations with certain types of people (ex. bullies or difficult people), imagine the bully in front of you (you can do this with your eyes open or closed—whatever is more comfortable for you), yelling at you—at the top of his/her voice, insulting you, putting you down, “commanding” you (like a dictator) to do things, etc. (imagine the worst case scenario). And while the bully is doing these things to you, “consciously” relax your body.

Be aware of any tension in your body, then think “relax.” Be aware of your breathing to make sure it's not shallow or too fast. Breathe naturally...in a relaxed manner. Feel your body becoming more and more relaxed as you imagine the bully doing his/her all to shake your foundation.

You could even smile...and I mean “actually smile”...or smile inside...while you're looking straight at him/her (as if you were saying to him/her, “*Who are you trying to fool?*”). Or even laugh inside...while you're looking at him/her. Whatever it takes for you to reach an empowering state—a “calm” or “relaxed” state.

The goal of this exercise is to link/associate the feeling of “calmness” or “being relaxed” with that particular fear (in this case, the bully) you're imagining.

If you do this exercise effectively (by the way, you can do it as many times as needed—although I’ve found that one or two sessions usually does the trick), when you are put in a situation where you have to face that particular fear (ex. the bully), you will feel calm or relaxed. Or, at the very least, the fear (or anxiety) you normally would have felt will

have decreased dramatically to the point where it no longer bothers or paralyzes you.

7. Constantly work on increasing your self-awareness—your self-knowledge. As some would say: Know thyself.

The more you know about yourself (your strengths, weaknesses, fears, beliefs, goals, motives, etc.), the calmer, more confident, and more courageous you'll be.

When two people meet, the prize always goes to the one with the most self-insight. He will be calmer, more confident, more at ease with the other.

~ Vernon Howard ~

He who knows much about others may be learned,
but he who understands himself is more intelligent.
He who controls others may be powerful,
but he who has mastered himself is mightier still.

~ Lao-Tzu ~

8. Make a list of the following, and review regularly, or once in a while (depending on the need), to serve as empowering reminders:

- Your past successes/victories
- Risks you've taken in the past
- Your past courageous acts

By reminding yourself of past victories, courageous acts, etc., it helps empower you in the present moment. Basically, what you're saying to yourself, as you face the present challenge, is, "*I've succeeded many times before, therefore I can do it again.*" Or, "*I've been victorious many times in the past, therefore I can be victorious again.*"

9. Surround yourself with others who help uplift your spirit. Avoid associating with those who like to bring you down or belittle your ideas (either because they don't believe in you or your ideas—or because they know they would be fearful in the same situation...and they want you to feel the same way so they won't be alone in feeling that way). In other words, choose your environment (which includes the people who surround you on a regular basis) wisely.

Remember: Courage is contagious. And so is cowardice.

We need to find the courage to say NO to the things and people that are not serving us if we want to rediscover ourselves and live our lives with authenticity.

~ Barbara De Angelis ~

To succeed in life, you have to forget about most people. If you want to rise to the top, you have to disregard the opinions, reactions, and warnings of others.

~ Ken Roberts ~

10. Get used to dealing with the unexpected (or uncertainty). In other words, don't wait until you have all the answers, or until you know it all, before taking any action. Don't wait until all conditions are perfect before taking the necessary steps you know you should take.

By mastering this skill, you'll be able to go out there in the world with courage and confidence, taking one action after another, no matter what the conditions may be. You'll be so used to dealing with the unexpected (having the ability to handle anything that comes your way) that even during times when you are not quite 100% prepared, you'll feel confident in taking action.

The number one characteristic of students who later become heads of companies is the ability to withstand uncertainty.

~ David A. Thomas, Dean, Cornell Business School ~

It is the individual's ability to deal with the unexpected that characterizes the difference between success and failure.

~ Ross Perot ~

The following quotes explain why it's usually not a good idea to wait until "all conditions are perfect" before taking action:

If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, you will never plant anything and never harvest anything.

~ Ecclesiastes 11:4 (Good News Bible) ~

Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must be first overcome.

~ Samuel Johnson ~

11. Simply decide that fear will not get in your way no matter what. If you happen to feel fear, for whatever reason, do what you have to do anyway. Act in spite of fear. You don't have to wait until the fear is gone. Like Susan Jeffers' book suggests: *Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway*.

In spite of fear, do what you have to do.

~ Chin-Ning Chu ~

Courage is acting in spite of fear.

~ Howard W. Hunter ~

12. Apply the "I have nothing to prove" or "I don't have to prove anything" attitude. Avoid feeling the need to prove yourself to anyone. Just be your natural self. Express your true self.

In fact, always make it your goal to "express," not "impress." When you're focused on "expressing," you'll be more at ease.

Your true nature never needs to anxiously prove itself to others, but lives in calm command, like a popular king.

~ Vernon Howard ~

The real acid test of courage is to be just your honest self when everybody is trying to be like somebody else.

~ Andrew Jensen ~

The time men spend in trying to impress others, they could spend in doing the things by which others would be impressed.

~ Frank Romer ~

Naturalness is the easiest thing in the world to acquire,
if you will forget yourself—forget about the impression
you are trying to make.

~ Dale Carnegie ~

This above all: to thine own self be true.

~ William Shakespeare ~

[In addition to the 12 principles above, read my article, **How To Be Confident And Relaxed When Speaking Before A Group Of People** (*Powerful Tips To Help You Become A Highly Effective Speaker/Presenter*), if you haven't done so already. You'll find that many of the principles in that article can be applied to life in general.]

I would like to end this article with a beautiful story I read many years ago.

Michaelangelo, the world famous painter, sculptor, and architect was once asked how he could carve such magnificent statues. And he answered, "*The perfect statue is already there within the block of marble. I simply chip away the excess.*"

And so it is with courage. It's already there within you. You only need to create or devise ways (like the ones I shared with you above) to chip away—or get rid of—any unnecessary fears, worries, apprehensions, etc., so that the courage within you will be unleashed more fully.

Ron Balagot is the author of *Unleash The Courageous Child Within* and *Confidence & Courage Tips...To Help You Realize Your Dreams*.

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