The Courage Myth

3 Catalysts to Strengthen the Master Virtue

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Of all the human virtues, courage stands as the master. Winston Churchill went so far as to state, "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities... because it is the quality which guarantees all others." Maya Angelou echoed this sentiment when she said, "Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently." Given this, our ability to demostrate honesty, humility, grit, fairness, compassion, patience, and all the other high-profile virtues rests on the shoulders of courage. So we had better get it right.

Hollywood and our national culture suggest courage is only present in the big, heroic examples from sports, combat or business. This type of "Big C" – courage seems reserved for legends and superhumans. But in reality, we're surrounded by courage every day, in moments big and small. People across every demographic, age and status step into moments of courage to remind us that it's part of our lives. Not superhuman, but human.

The universally familiar battleground for courage is reflected in how people from all walks of life finish this simple prompt, ***"It takes real courage to…"***

- Change
- Admit
- Accept discomfort
- Take a risk
- Give up control
- Ask for help
- Confront
- Listen
- Forgive
- Start something new
- Stop something familiar
- Follow
- Go against the crowd
- Raise a concern
- Apologize
- Start over
- Let go
- Persevere
- Speak truth
- Be quiet
- Take a different path
- Try something new
- Take on responsibility
- Own your mistakes
- Sacrifice
- Acknowledge flaws
- Push back

Of course, we could extend this list, but odds are, most of the examples we can think of from Hollywood heroes and "normal" people like you and me are represented somewhere in it. If we dissect courageous moments -- from charging the enemy on the battlefield to telling a friend you're concerned about their drinking – we will likely find one or two elements from the list above. So, in one sense we should be encouraged that opportunities for courage are all around us, but on the other hand, we know that with each opportunity we have the chance to fail. So the million-dollar question is, *"When the testable moments arrive, how can I act with courage (and help others do it)?"* The typical response to this question often perpetuates a myth about courage – one we must challenge to actually pass the test.

The Courage Myth

As weird as it sounds, the myth is that you and I ***have*** courage. I suggest that we don't have courage, and never will (but that's okay). Actually it's even worse than that. No one has ever had courage. (How do you like me now?)

Like you, I'm bothered by this because I can think of countless people in my life and throughout history who had courage – both physical and moral. Military warriors, civil rights leaders, trauma survivors, intervening bystanders, people who spoke truth to power, the first person to eat an oyster, and on and on. It's hard to accept these people didn't have courage. But that's what I'm saying. Here's why…

People don't have courage, because it's not something to <u>have</u>. It's something to <u>demonstrate</u>. Courage is not an input, it's the outcome. It's is not a resource to reach for, any more than "delicious" is a spice on the shelf. We only assign the virtue of courage to people <u>after</u> they have demonstrated it. So, *Courage is not what helps us take positive action. "Courage" is just what we call it when it happens.*

When we ask the Medal of Honor recipient or intervening bystander, "But *what actually gave* you the courage to do what you did?" we are highlighting the fact that something different facilitated the courageous act. Something gave them the potential to *act courageously*, and it's not courage. It's something else. That's the real target. And it's what helps us navigate the Gap to bring courage to life.

Welcome to the Gap

C.S. Lewis famously stated, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, it is the form of every virtue at its testing point". The testing point for our virtues (and thus, our character and identity) is the "Decision-Action Gap" (Figure 1; USAFA - Basik et al., 2012). The left side of Gap below represents the point where we've decided what should be done. By this point, we've already wrestled with critical thinking, moral reasoning, emotions, biases and philosophical lenses, to conclude, "In order to be who I'm committed to being, I should/ought to/must do this." This side of the Gap represents the word we give to ourselves or someone else; the promise made; the standard; our duty; the voice of our conscience or internal compass about the right thing to do, now. It's all those things on the "Courage to…" list above.

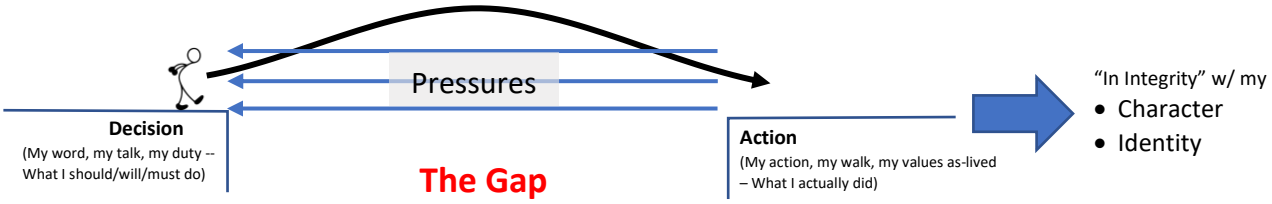


Figure 1. The Decision-Action Gap (based on the US Air Force Academy's Framework for developing Leaders of Character)

The "Action" side of the Gap is the successful execution of this intent. On this right side (double entendre intended), our identity is being lived out – at least in this moment. It's the "talk" being "walked", the promise kept, the goal achieved, the standard upheld, the values and virtues delivered. We either did the thing or we didn't. Having reached this side, we are one iteration closer to our true identity and character coming to life. As Dr. Peter Rea argues, "It is not a virtue until we act" (p. 2).

But this is called the "Gap" for a reason. In perhaps the biggest understatement in history: people don't always do what they say. This gap exists in all parts of our lives. As Matt Davidson, Director of the Excellence with Integrity Institute points out, sometimes the gap has moral components (i.e., I am not being as honest, compassionate, fair, patient, honorable as I should be), and sometimes it is more performance-based (i.e., I procrastinate, avoid an important conversation, give up too soon, or I slack on the standards). People definitely notice when the decision and action don't line up, and perceptions about integrity and character are at stake.

At its heart, integrity is simply about alignment. It's consistently showing up on the "action" platform. When the Gap is not crossed, and people are "out of integrity," we notice and adjust our perceptions accordingly. But integrity with ourselves is at stake as well. If we violate the very values, commitments and standards we know in our gut we should uphold, the "out of integrity" dashboard light should be flashing. However, getting to the right side of the Gap not always easy. Something is in the way, which makes doing "the hard, right thing,"…hard.

"If we violate the very values, commitments and standards we know in our gut we should uphold, the 'Out of Integrity' dashboard light should be flashing."

The Pressures at the Gap

Our ability to cross the Gap is impacted by pressures acting as headwinds, pushing us away from our intended actions and identity. I should speak up, but I don't want to be labeled disloyal. I want leave this abusive relationship, but I don't know where to go. I should get up and work out, but the bed is so warm. I want to be a compassionate person, but this guy is obnoxious. Each pressure represents a type of excuse – legitimate or not – which has the potential to overwhelm our willingness or ability to demonstrate self-discipline, will-power, honesty or grit or any virtue or promise we espouse.

But when the dominating pressure is FEAR, the moment is now about courage.

Think of anyone in history who demonstrated physical or moral courage (to include the first oyster eater), and you can easily identify the fear they had to push through. Without fear, there is no courage. Typically, the fears fall into at least one of these 3 categories:

1. ***Fear of Pain, Discomfort or Death.*** It is always more attractive to accept comfort and safety. But those who choose to accept the opposite and press on, earn the badge of courage. When we tell ourselves, "I don't feel like it," "This is going to suck," or "I'm scared to death to do this," we're giving voice to this pressure.

2. ***Fear of Consequence (to Include Fear of the Unknown).*** Anticipated physical, social, emotional or professional consequences explain why so many people buckle at the Gap. Sometimes, we can anticipate the impact of taking action. But in other times, especially in times of ambiguity or uncertainty, fear of the unknown can keep even the best of us sidelined. By taking action, we accept what results follow (e.g., retribution, isolation, unwanted drama, pain, workload, etc.), which can frighten us into inaction.

3. ***Fear of Loss***. Behavioral scientists have consistently demonstrated that people fear loss about twice as much as they value gain ("loss aversion"; Kahneman, 2011). This can be a loss of income, respect, friendships, employment status, property, status with a valued group and so on. When we don't want to lose, we freeze.

Notice how these themes are prepresented in the world cloud below. Here, workshop attendees from around the world respond to the following prompt:

"When people (including you) don't take the action they should, it's because of the FEAR OF…"

When we confront these fears and take action ***anyway***, we stand on the right side of the Gap, and have brought courage to life (we don't <u>have</u> it, we have <u>demonstrated</u> it). Two important things to note: First, success is not a requirement for courage, just action. The terrified boy who asks the girl on a date has demonstrated courage by asking, not dating. The cancer patient can absolutely demonstrate courage up to the moment their battle ends, whether they survive or not.

"Success is not a requirement for courage, just action."

Second, it's the perception that matters -- fear's strength as pressure is in the eye of the beholder. If you don't perceive there is danger (even when there is), then the action is not courageous, it's obliviousness ("What do you mean the building I just went into was on fire?!"). Conversely, if someone perceives danger, even if it's not present, then acting in the face of that misperception is still courageous (e.g., the terrified 5 year old checks under his little brother's bed for monsters; a student admits to cheating, thinking incorrectly it will result in expulsion).

So this description of Courage – taking intended, positive action in spite of perceived fear – leaves us confronting the Myth, and needing a solution.

MYTH: To get across the Gap, in spite of fear, we must have courage. (wrong)

REALITY: When we cross the Gap, in spite of fear, that IS courage.

So the real question is,
"What **actually** gets us across the Gap (in spite of fear), to <u>act</u> courageously?"

Busting the Myth: How to ACTUALLY Strengthen Courageous Action

No matter what "Fear of…" we face, in order to increase the likelihood of courageous action, we have 3 options: reduce the size of the Gap, reduce the headwinds of fear, or increase the strength of our jump.

Figure 2. The 3 options for increasing the likelihood for courageous action

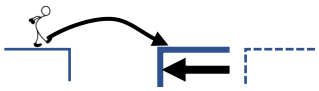
Obviously, any combination of these options compounds the goodness. If the Gap is shortened, fear is reduced, *and* the Gap-jumping horsepower is increased, then courageous action is even more likely.

The 3 Courage Catalysts

We now arrive at the secret sauce for taking action worthy of being called courageous. These "catalysts" answer the question, "But what actually *gave you* the courage?" When we ask people, from school children to Medal of Honor recipients what helped them overcome the fears to act courageously, 3 clear themes emerged.

Catalyst #1: Increase COMPETENCE

(Shorten the Gap)



Ask any Medal of Honor recipient how they were able to do what they did in the face of Herculean pressures (pain, fatigue, uncertainty, loss, resource constraints, etc.), and they will very likely say with the utmost humility, "I was just doing what I was trained to do. It was almost second nature." Believing you have no ability, plan or tools to succeed leaves fear to dominate the Gap. Conversely, even if it is inaccurate, the perception, "I have a path through this that I can execute" explains why people take action, in spite of fear. So what helps people elevate their belief that there is a way to do this?

Hunt for the Tools. Sincerely ask, "What can I possibly do or learn to make this easier?" With training, education, and learning from others, we can arm ourself with tools to succeed at the Gap. Turn to mentors and others who have had success where you struggle, follow their clues, and add to your toolkit. Tips, strategies, roadmaps, "life hacks," and checklists can make courageous action just a matter of following a plan. Dr. Carol Dweck's (2006) work on Growth Mindset encourages us to shift our approach from "Can I do this?" to "*How* can I do this?" and hunt for the fear-dampening tools you lack.

Gather Scripts. Often, people don't take action because they don't know how to have the uncomfortable discussions effectively. Simply having some options of realistic language to deliver can elevate competence (e.g., "I can actually say, 'Hey boss, I'm concerned about something and could use

your help…'"). Mentors, peers, authors, etc., can easily share their approach to similar pressures (e.g., "Here's what I say to myself…" or "When firing someone, begin the conversation this way…."). Knowing and practicing what to say reduces fear and makes action more doable.

Turn the Race into Steps. The Gap can often feel too far because we look at the whole journey at once. Getting a degree at night, raising a child, going through chemo, paying off debt, completing boot camp – all of these can be overwhelming mountains to climb. But by breaking the challenge into the next, right step (e.g., the first class, first day of parenting, first round of chemo, smallest credit card…) we see stepping stones we can easily take. Often this requires us to exchange the long-term struggle for the obstacle right in front of us, and narrow our focus to only those things we can control.

Build muscle memory. For a parachute jumpmaster with 500 jumps under her belt, the 501st jump is no longer a courage gauntlet, even though it's still a 10,000 foot drop. With each rep, we add to our resume of things we've done in the face of fear. With practice, we build strength and stamina – courage muscle memory – so we can more easily take action and push through headwinds. Even small moments of truth-telling, self-discipline, humility, resistance to peer pressure, and appropriate risk-taking can create competence to strengthen us in the future, so courage comes more naturally.

Catalyst #2: Strengthen CONFIDENCE

(Reduce the Fear)

As any kid with a bike and a ramp can attest, when you think you can make the jump, you're more likely to take flight (despite what your mom and the laws of physics might be screaming at you). The "Fear of…" is often based on narratives of insecurity, and fed by assumptions of cataclysmic outcomes and worst-case scenarios. These doubts can paralyze us, even when he have all the competence we need. The goal here is to look for things that lead us to conclude, "I can actually pull this off." When people share what helped them gain the confidence to take action, in spite of fear, clear strategies emerge:

Find Wingmen. One of the most flawed assumptions in courage moments is the belief we have to do it alone. Conversely, one of the most commonly cited factors people share for their courage success is, "I leaned on those around me." People say friends and family helped them be courageous, but it's what those people *provided* that really matters. The encouragement, reminders of their strength, shared concerns and commitments, divided burdens – all of these factors made them feel like the action was achievable. There is a reason accountability partners, teammates an coaches are so effective. When the physical, social, emotional or work pressures overwhelm us, we can find strength and perspective through others. Others can remind us what is possible in ourselves, or what we can do together.

"One of the most flawed assumptions in courage moments is the belief we have to do it alone."

Reframe the Moment. Maybe the fear isn't as bad as we initially perceive. We often convince ourselves that the moment at hand is unique and dramatic, when in fact, it may be pretty common, especially for the context we're in. If we normalize the fact that holding people accountable, bringing up ethical concerns, facing temptations, and struggling with fears are part of life and leadership, it may feel less daunting. By recognizing that people commonly struggle with these tensions, we can feel encouraged there is a way through this. I spoke to one entrepreneur who said, "It was so reassuring to hear out how many other business owners struggle with letting go of a toxic high performer." Realizing this challenge has been conquered by others, we can see success in our own story.

Acknowledge Similar Successes. Confidence comes from realizing how the current situation compares to ones in which we've previously succeeded. We can remind ourselves and others about the strength we/they have when we point out, "If you made it through that, you can make it through this." Fear in combat is not exactly like fear in high school sports, but something may transfer. An abused spouse who thinks she can't leave a relationship may find confidence in remembering she started a new life after college. Our experiences, abilities and strengths may translate to this new test.

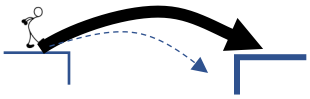
Build Momentum. The courage test is not so frightening if it's just a little bigger than the last successful one. When I was teaching at the Air Force Academy, I would help cadets struggling to jump off the 10-meter platform into the pool (a graduation requirement). I would jump with them over 15 iterations, exactly the same way off the 1-meter, 3-meter, and 5-meter platforms. We walked with the same cadence, stepped off with the same foot, entered the water in the same position, and even did it to the same music. By the time we got to the 10-meter, they had muscle memory, habits, and experience. The extra 5 meters didn't seem too frightening. See how and where you can create victories that build confidence. Conquering little discomfort, temptations and dilemmas successfully gives us fuel to conquer the bigger challenges to come.

See Yourself in Others. It's easier to believe the Gap is crossable if someone like you has done it. Just as exemplars and role models can offer tips and tools to elevate competence, seeing their example of success can build confidence as we confront similar fears. Jackie Robinson gave young black athletes an undeniable example of what was possible, in spite of bigotry and racism. As the only math-loving girl entering her first high school engineering class, my daughter's fears about competing with the boys were squashed when the teacher – a woman engineer – entered the room. "She's me, just older. I can do this," she said. We are inspired by others because they remind us of what is possible in us.

Have Faith. This may be religious faith, a just-world hypothesis, or simple optimism, but our willingness to leap when we still aren't sure explains many courageous acts. There are always going to be things we can't control, so having some semblance of faith that those will work out gives us confidence to take action.

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." -Nelson Mandela

Catalyst #3: Tap Into COMMITMENT



(Strengthen the Jump)

Why did a whistleblower speak up, despite not knowing if it would end well? "Because it was the right thing to do, and I couldn't look at myself in the mirror any more if I didn't act." Why would an executive accept financial catastrophy by pulling dangerous products from shelves? "Our values are clear – we put the safety and needs of our customers over financial gain" (see Johnson & Johnson's "Credo"). Why would a warrior rejoin the firefight despite the danger and fatigue? "Because we never leave a soldier behind." Why does the amputee do one more rep despite the crushing pain. "Because I'm going to dance at my daughter's wedding." Think of any act of courage, and one thing shines through – they felt it was worth it.

The most powerful courage catalyst lies in how we connect this moment to what matters to us. Even when competence and confidence is low, the fuel of commitment can be enough to drive action in the face of almost any fear. So how do we strengthen this critical resource?

Clarify the Stand. Unless there is clarity on what identity we pursue – what values and virtues we commit to – we are adrift, and can't stand up to the pressures. It is important to make the implicit, explicit, and unpack in detail "what we stand for." Broadly stated core values are merely bumper stickers unless they're translated into what those values look like in the real world. Leadership and coaching expert Kari Granger lays the challenge by asking, "What are you a warrior for?" This is not some academic exercise, but instead is an emotional, heart-on-the-line reflection and declaration about "Who I am/we are," and "What do I/we want to fight to bring to life." It's got to be emotionally salient, because the testable moments will challenge us to prove we're serious.

One way to elevate this connection is to identify what's at stake if you do <u>not</u> live out this identity. For example, would it bother you if you are seen as someone who is NOT honest? Not professional? Not willing to defend someone else? If this is unacceptable, own it and fight for the identity. That's why fear of regret can be a powerful motivator. It is fundamentally human for us to avoid being less than we could have been. Similarly, people are often strengthened in their resolve through the commitment to proving others wrong ("I wanted to see the look on their face!"). Think of how many people accomplished heroic things and endured amazing pressures, just to stick it to their critics.

> "What values, habits, attitudes, language, rationalizations, excuses and actions are inconsistent with who I am/we are trying to be?"

Define the No-Go's. It is important for people and organizations to not only define in detail what they stand "for," but also what they stand "from". What values, habits, attitudes, language, rationalizations, excuses and actions are inconsistent with who I am/we are trying to be? Part of this process should also include identifying the rationalizations and excuses inconsistent with the identity they pursue. For example, when we entertain logic like, "That's good enough," "I'll never get this," or "No one's ever going to find out," we accept the very mindsets that cause us to buckle at the Gap. Defining the non-negotiables creates red-line threshholds about what is out of integrity.

Get to the Core. Sometimes the moments for courageous action are filled with noise obscuring what's really at stake. When we remove those distractions, we more clearly see that the moment at hand is more strongly tied to our values than we realized. A student who is considering cheating on a seemingly inconsequential quiz may approach it differently if he sees this as a test of his character. I know as a parent, I've been distracted in moments where I modeled lazy or low-character behavior when, if I saw the instance as a chance to be an example to my kids for virtues of work ethic or honesty, I would have acted differently. If we realize how others will be impacted by our action or inaction, it can further remind us of what is really at stake.

Define Your Tribe. Who we are is largely defined by who we stand with. Having "wingmen" who also commit to the values and identity you pursue can create a courage-strengthening cohort. Renown psychologist Angela Duckworth points out in her research on grit, if you wan't someone to be "gritty," put them on a gritty team (2016). People will modify their behaviors to maintain membership in a group they value, so we might as well immerse ourself in formal and informal groups where members know how important it is to cross the Gap. Seek a tribe that is courageous.

Share Your Commitments. When we articulate to others what values and virtues we're trying to bring to life, three things happen. First, we create an accountability mechanism that encourages us to lean across the Gap. There's positive peer pressure to make good on your word to avoid being a hypocrite. Second, we invite others to help us be who we're trying to be. In turn, when we hear others' commitments, we may see opportunities to help them confront and overcome pressures they're facing. Finally, sharing commitments reminds us of what matters to us, and deepens our commitment even further in a self-reinforcing way.

"What *gave you* the courage to actually do the hard, right thing?" These 3 catalysts are the real ingredients for courageous action. *Increasing competence and confidence reduces the fear factor, and pulls the sides of the gaps closer together.* Easier jump. *Strengthening commitment gives us more strength to act courageously.* More jumping horsepower. When put into practice, the 3 Catalysts explain why someone took action, in spite of fear, to cross the Gap. If we want "more courage," we'll need to dial up one or more of these factors. If we see someone (including ourselves) not demonstrating courage, we can connect the dots back to one or more of these 3 elements being weak.

"Courage is the commitment to begin without any guarantee of success." -Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Creating a Courageous Culture

The concept of courage is critical in our organizations as much as it is in our personal lives, and leaders have a key role in increasing the potential for courage. As individuals on their own character journeys, they need to tend to their own competence, confidence and commitment. But because they are leaders, they also have the responsibility to develop the 3 catalysts in others, and foster a culture where doing the hard, right thing is "the way we roll."

Leaders working on their own courage actually pays off in two additional ways. First, they are modeling the type of self-development others should follow. Secondly, their influence as leaders in a team or organization signals the importance of the values and virtues the organization professes. Courageous mindsets and actions are contagious, especially when the one "infecting" others is the leader. It's no surprise that the 2020 Global Business Ethics survey finds that in organizations where leaders are perceived as committed to organizational values and ethics, followers feel compelled to align their actions as well (2020, p. 8). But never forget, one of the strongest drivers of negative moral and ethical "drift" in organizations is also leadership. If the boss buckles to pressure when it's time to do the hard right thing, don't be surprised if the rest of the tribe follows suit. Here are some other specific actions leaders can take, beyond just their own role-modeling, to create a courage-strong culture.

"If the boss buckles to pressure when it's time to do the hard right thing, don't be surprised if the rest of the tribe follows suit."

Creating a Courageous Culture -- COMPETENCE

Show Them What Right Sounds Like. Leaders can make the implicit explicit by sharing out loud how they (properly) think through moral decisions, have tough conversations, and talk to themselves when they're struggling at the Gap. It can also be helpful for leaders to offer some guidance on how people can best raise concerns and offer criticisms in ways the leaders will be most receptive to.

Define the Criteria. If risk-taking is an expectation in your organization, people may be afraid of the consequences, should the outcome not go well. Help add to their competence by sharing the criteria for a "good fail" – where you'd still give them a high-5 for even a faulty attempt.

Push People to the Gap. Experience is the big teacher, so empower and delegate decisions which cause employees to struggle with fear. You can still support and coach them, but only through the struggle do people see how they really respond. Then, harvest the insights to add to their toolkit.

Creating a Courageous Culture -- CONFIDENCE

Lock in the Right Behaviors. Leaders can build courage confidence by reinforcing and supporting actions where people do the hard, right thing when no one is watching, when everyone is watching, or if just the customer is watching. Any opportunity to signal, "That's what we're talking about!" is golden. Recognizing even the small victories signals "even stuff like this matters," and increases the likelihood the behavior endures. For people to feel, "I can do it," it helps to point out, "You just did it!" when they cross the Gap.

Lock Out the Wrong Behaviors. While it should be safe to make mistakes and bring up bad news, when people willfully violate the organizational identity, the response should be clear and swift. What leaders tolerate will endure, and what they model will thrive – especially the bad examples. Hold

accountable unhealthy Gap language, rationalizations, and excuses. When leaders demonstrate they are serious about confronting violations, those trying to do the right thing will feel confident they'll have support if they act courageously.

Name the Pressures. Organizations that talk openly and consistently about the pressures persistent in "what we do" not only normalize them, but create a safe way for the community to create and share solutions. For example, if my team acknowledges temptations exist to cut corners or avoid tough conversations, we can help pull each other across the Gap to uphold the standards or speak up.

Get Trust Right. There is a reason low trust organizations have higher levels of misconduct and lower performance (Mo & Shi, 2015). People are less willing to be vulnerable if they feel their risk will not be honored by teammates or leaders. Conversely, fear is squashed in a culture where people know it is safe to lean on others, feel empowered by leaders, and can depend on others to do what they should. To strengthen trust, leaders and teammates must be seen as competent, caring, and of high integrity (Davis, Mayer & Schoorman, 2007). Trust makes courageous action more accessible.

Creating a Courageous Culture -- COMMITMENT

Define the Stand. Organizational members must be clear on "who we are and what we stand for" beyond just the bumper sticker core values. Leaders should invite employees to discuss what the right and wrong behaviors looks and sounds like in their context. Part of that discussion should also involve who is impacted and what's at stake when they don't deliver on their identity promise.

Beat the Drum…Constantly. Discussions about identity, values, ethical standards, and how to push through the pressures at the Gap should be constant and organically infused in the culture. The Special Operations Forces community identified as one of it's "Ethical Truths" the fact that, in order to minimize moral drift, the culture must be "an environment where conversations about ethical decisions, good and bad, are a natural occurrence"(Labuz et al, 2020). Much like Harvard University is with intellectual curiosity, organizations should strive to make courageous action "the air we breath."

Make it Personal. Perhaps the best way to strengthen commitment is to have people interpret how and why they care about the organization's values. Go heavy with stories. Bring in customers to share why what you do matters. Have people share their commitments, and ensure leaders join in. When people truly commit to the culture, they define for themselves and each other what is worth pushing through fear to honor.

Conclusion

Medal of Honor recipients, astronauts, civil rights leaders, elite athletes, trauma survivors – you name it – every single one of them acted courageously. But none of them did what they did because they had courage. They had competence, confidence and commitment to battle through the fear and stand in integrity with the values we applaud. Because of that, we all have hope. When faced with the testable moments of life, we can look across the Gap and use the actual things that allow us to be "courageous."

We simply need to recognize the fear, and tap into 3 catalysts that activate courageous behavior. Over time, we can get better and better at handling these moments, building courageous muscle memory and habits of excellence within ourselves and those we lead. We don't ***have*** courage, and that's okay, as long as we take action and ***display*** it when the moment comes. If the oyster guy can do it, so can we.

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Kevin served for over 23 years as a decorated Air Force officer, delivering values-based leadership development to the military and beyond. A 1993 United States Air Force Academy graduate, Kevin earned his Master's in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and PhD in Organizational Behavior, studying the concept of "behavioral integrity" as a driver of trust, accountability and performance.

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(To continue exploring the topic of courage, join us in the LinkedIn Group "The Courage Forum")

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