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Mindful Monday, September 7, 2020

"Courage doesn't mean you don't get afraid. Courage means you don't let fear stop you"
- **Bethany Hamilton**

In her Ted Talk, ["The beautiful balance between courage and fear."](#) Cara E. Yar Khan reminds us that *"life is really just a lesson in finding the balance between fear and courage and understanding what is and isn't a good idea."* She also tells us that *"without fear we'll do foolish things and without courage we'll never step into the unknown."* Her talk was released prior to COVID in December 2019.

At present, many of us are experiencing elements of fear daily, and, I think, unbeknownst to most people, most of us are demonstrating quiet courage daily. Without question, the presence of fear may be relatively constant, given the uncertainty of our circumstances. Still, alongside that fear, many people demonstrate courage daily as they head into the unknown and continue with their lives, including (gulp) sending kids to school this week. A healthy dose of fear may be useful for us as it can both prevent us from doing foolish things and help us take precautions seriously. However, when fear paralyzes us, we need to recognize fear for what it is and take steps to relax its grip on our thoughts.

One way to calm fear is to harness your courage to act, to moderate your fear with courage. Enter the courage quotient (image from [optimize.me](#)). Courage can be defined as your willingness to act over your ability to control fear. Courage does not need to be loud or carried out with bravado. It can be quiet and subtle. Courage does not mean you are acting without fear, but instead, you feel the fear and act despite it. Over time, little acts of courage can not only fight fear but grow confidence as well.

$$\text{COURAGE QUOTIENT} = \frac{\text{WILLINGNESS TO ACT}}{\text{FEAR}}$$

Your willingness to act does not need to be significantly greater than your fear; it just needs to be big enough to overcome it. Here are some simple examples:

- ▶ Courage is feeling afraid of venturing out into public spaces but going out while taking the precautions to stay safe and minimize risk (i.e., wearing a mask, physical distancing, washing/sanitizing hands)
- ▶ Courage is taking action to alter the way we live to stay safe during the pandemic
- ▶ Courage is our kids acknowledging their back to school angst and going back to school, adapting to the new normal
- ▶ Courage is parents and caregivers sending kids back to school or taking responsibility and making a commitment to their child's education, however that may look
- ▶ Courage is teachers and school staff returning to work
- ▶ Courage is taking action to find new ways to connect and interact with those we may not be able to visit in person
- ▶ Courage is acknowledging that things are uncertain, and that life can be scary, while demonstrating a willingness to move forward, adapt and iterate again, and again and again

Today, as I walked my kids to the bus for the first day of school, I could not help but think about all parents and caregivers. Whether it's the courage to decide to send our kids to school, to keep them at home and attempt to take on a teacher's role, or any decision in between— from one parent to another, I salute your courage.

When we act, even in small ways, we show courage. Remember, whether you recognize it or not, you are courageous every day. Bit by bit, you can chip away at your fear, release your courage, and continue onward.