

face YOUR COMMUNICATION FEARS

OUR PERSONAL AND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS create opportunities for us to practice acts of courage on a daily basis.

What constitutes an act of courage depends on the person involved. What's frightening to one individual may be "no big deal" for another. For many people, standing up to others, especially to someone with more power is extremely difficult. For a tough and sassy type admitting he or she was wrong may be a personal challenge.

EITHER SITUATION requires the individual to move out of his or her comfort zone and practice new ways of communicating.

Good communication is a skill that requires practice. You may not get it right from the start; the important thing is to keep trying. If things don't go well the first time, give yourself a "do over" and fix it. I'm not saying you should have the same conversation over and over again. I'm talking about continuing a previous conversation after tempers have receded, or clearing up a misunderstanding once you've had time to think about the situation.

My friend Carolyn had one of those courageous moments. She was on the receiving end of an ugly conversation with her co-worker, Bruce. He interrupted her, accused her of dropping the ball, ordered her to fix his problem immediately and then stormed off.

Later that day Carolyn went to his office. Although she was nervous and not sure what to say, she remained calm.

"I didn't like the way our conversation went earlier today," she said.

"You were angry, but you didn't have the whole story." You would hope that after gathering her courage and confronting Bruce face-to-face, Carolyn's efforts would merit a worthy reception. Instead, Bruce got fired up all over again. Carolyn stood her ground. "Let's not get defensive," she said. "I just wanted to straighten things out between us. I really didn't appreciate the way you treated me earlier, and I don't like how you are talking to me right now."

"I don't know what you're talking about," was Bruce's response.

When Carolyn told me about the whole ordeal, she was wondering what she did wrong. "Not a thing!" I said. I reminded her that she left her comfort zone, spoke up for herself, and was teaching Bruce how she wanted to be treated,

and these were all good things.

In her book, *The Joy Diet*, Martha Beck says every time you take a new risk and survive it, you gain confidence. As you continue taking chances you will discover the things that used to intimidate you now seem manageable. It doesn't mean you're not frightened; if you weren't, there would be no courage. It means being afraid and doing it anyway.

Even Carolyn's story has a happy ending. After their conversation, Bruce began treating her with a courtesy and respect he had never shown before. According to Carolyn, "It was worth every awkward moment."

Having the courage to go through with a difficult conversation doesn't mean both sides will speak calmly and listen without interruption. It does mean you will grow and evolve. You'll be different because you tried something different.

So, even if the conversation isn't pretty, the end result can be beautiful. 🌈

~GINA CROWLEY

"Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared."

— Eddie Rickenbacker,
WWI Fighter Ace