

# 144. How to have more courage

**Vanessa 00:00**

Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

Hi, Friends, welcome back to the podcast today is a short and sweet episode, to walk you through and teach you how to have more courage. And I bring this topic to you because I have learned from my own life experience and from watching all of my students, and a lot of my people that I really admire in life, how everything we want, everything we want in the world is on the other side of courage.

You want to be successful, you have to have the courage to fail. You want to fall in love madly and deeply, you have to have the courage to have your heart broken, you want more intimacy, you have to have the courage to be vulnerable. And here's the thing about courage. Many of us have it. But we don't think we do we think we're really bad at it. So let me tell you a story. Because if you're like me, this might resonate with you.

Now, I actually did not think I had courage. I did not think I was brave. I thought that that was one of the biggest virtues that I was lacking. And, you know, for me, courage was so important that one of the very first things one of the very first virtues I would teach my daughter when she was growing up, was to have the courage to be brave to stand up for yourself to speak your truth. Now remember, even when she was like 18 months old, or two years old, those are the conversations I would have with her. And so for me, you know, a few years ago, this is how I started learning that way, actually, maybe I am a little bit brave, maybe I do have courage. So a few years ago, I was flying to a conference. And I happened to be at the airport. And I run into a friend of mine who is also speaking at this conference, she also happens to be a physician and an entrepreneur. And we're sharing each other's life stories with each other. And I started sharing with her, you know how I matched into anesthesiology as an intern. And when I was doing my anesthesiology rotations, I was like hold on a second, this doesn't feel right. I don't think this is the specialty for me. And so I decided to go back into the application process, which is called the match and match into the specialty that was calling me which was emergency medicine.

And I remember knowing that there was no certainty that I could go back into the match. And I could potentially not get a spot in emergency medicine, I would have to go through all the interviews again and have to be stuck doing anesthesia. Or I would have to redo my entire intern year again. And then it's like man, half that doesn't sound great. But I know that I have to follow my heart. And so I rematched. And luckily for me, I found a second spot in emergency medicine in a fantastic program. And then I shared with her how I took a job as a medical director and department chief one year out of residency, and how I was so scared and nervous. And I was you know leading these positions that were so much older than I was I would have to counsel some doctors for bad behavior. And they were they'd been

practicing for so much longer than I had even been alive for some of these Docs and how afraid I was or how I would sit on these national boards or med Exec. And sometimes I was the only woman or the only person of color, and how I would speak up anyway. And I would sit in the front row. And how I eventually turned it down. This prescribed career path for me, which was in hospital admin after had been offered two chief medical officer jobs. I had turned them both down and decided to follow my heart instead and start my own business doing what I'm doing now, which is coaching brilliant, beautiful souls and helping them create the most impact they can have in the world.

So I share I'm sharing all these things with her and she says to me, Wow, you have so much courage. And I remember thinking what, that didn't take courage? That was scary. And she's like, Yeah, that seems like so much courage to me. And so I realized holy smokes, maybe she's right, maybe I do have courage. Maybe I can take action when I'm afraid. And then I remembered something my husband had shared with me so long ago that I sort of brushed off. My husband told me that he read this quote, and the quote is life expands or shrinks in proportion to one's courage. That quote was written in like the early 1900s by this author, this incredible author who happened to be A Cuban woman. And he said, You know, oftentimes I see other people and I'm like, Man, Vanessa lives more in a day or a year than most people live their entire lives. And I was like, wow, that's sweet, really thoughtful. And maybe, maybe he's right. Maybe I do have courage. Maybe my girlfriend was right. Maybe I do have courage. And then I started reflecting on all my students who judged themselves for not having enough courage. I was like, wow, why is it that we all push that away? And for me, it was because courage feels so uncomfortable.

Courage feels so hard. And because it felt hard, I thought that I was bad at it. But what is courage, courage is the mental and moral strength to persevere, and with state and withstand fear. So there needs to be fear. It needs to be hard for you to be practicing courage. Courage is the ability to overcome danger or difficulty in the face of fear. Because there is no courage without fear. Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the ability to act to take actions despite fear, your ability to demonstrate determination, bravery, and resilience, that's courage. And that, my friends, is uncomfortable. Because if you have to run towards something scary, guess what? All the red flags in your body are showing up telling you to stop danger. But when you say no, I know that what I want is on the other side of me taking these actions. That's where courage shows up for you. So how do we practice courage? How do we get more courage? Well, the first thing you have to do is stop thinking that you don't have it.

Stop thinking you don't have it just because it's hard. One of my current coaching clients, one of my one on one clients, this incredibly successful, dude, he's like, in his mid-60s, he came to this country as an immigrant doesn't still speak the language didn't have had an eighth-grade education, didn't have any money, when he got here fled his country in the middle of a civil war, comes here, works his butt off, creates this successful business, has a beautiful family, like essentially lives what is known as the American dream, and is having this you know, he has a successful business. And he's in this stage in his life, where he's like, wow, you know, I'm ready. Like, I want more. And so we're working together because he's ready to see like, what's waiting for him after 60? And he tells me in one of our very first sessions, I said, you know, what is it that you want to work on? And he said, I just don't want to be

afraid anymore. I don't want to have fear. And I thought, holy smokes, isn't that so fascinating? Here's this person. That, to me, is the perfect example of courage.

Coming here with nothing, not even speaking the language, no money, nothing. So working his butt off taking all of these actions in the face of fear, starting his own business, creating it so that it's successful and sustaining for him. And now he's telling me he's coming back out, you know when he could just retire? And he says, No, I want to know, what's for me, like what's waiting for me on the other side of 60 and and telling me that what he wants, it doesn't want to be afraid anymore. And so, you know, my question to him was, what if all that fear was, was what helped you like, what if that fears, what helped you create this life you had? Because you had courage? Because there are so many people that would have experienced the same circumstances and stopped and stopped and stopped and run the other way? But he did not.

And so my friends, the first step, and having more courage is first to stop thinking that you don't have it because it's hard. Stop thinking you don't have it because it's hard. Because the truth is, taking action in the face of fear is hard for everybody. Or else there would be no fear, when you can take an action and you're like, oh, yeah, I'm not afraid. That's probably because you don't need courage for that action. It's just because it's an action that you take when you're afraid to take the action. That's when courage is showing up for you. When you take those actions in the face of that fear. That's when courage is showing up for you. And all you need is just a few seconds of courage. That's it. Because once you can muster those few seconds of courage to just start that action, that's all you need, because objects in action stay in action. So all you need to do is get over that initial hump. That's it. Like Newton's law, objects in action, stay in action, and objects at rest, stay at rest. So all you need to do is take those very few seconds. Get yourself into that motion,

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take that action and face it. Fear. And the more you do that, the easier it gets, the more action you take, the easier it gets. And that's actually how we build the muscle of courage. You keep taking more and more action when that when it's scary. And what you're doing is you're retraining your brain or body or spirit and you're telling yourself, well, maybe this isn't that scary, and then you're able to do something even scarier. So I'm gonna end with just this last story. So I watched a movie with my kids a few weeks ago, I think it was called We Bought a Zoo. It was based on a true story, this family. Anyway, the details aren't important.

The point is that in the movie, the main character is sharing the story of when he met his wife. And he says that he's walking down the street, and he sees her sitting at this coffee shop. And he looks over and he says, Wow, here's this person, the most beautiful person I've ever seen. And there's something about her, I just need to talk to her. And he was so afraid. He said he froze up. And he was so scared. And he reminded himself of something his brother had said, which is, that all you need is 20 seconds of courage.

That's it, just take 20 seconds of courage and you can change your life. So he took a deep breath in and he said, 20 seconds, that's all I need. And he walks into the coffee shop, and he introduces himself to her. She invites him to sit down and have a conversation. And that's what started their relationship,

taking those 20 seconds of courage. So my invitation to all of you today, for the rest of this year, and for the rest of your life, is to lean in and remind yourself that you are so much braver than you think you have so much more courage than you think. And all you ever need to start is those few seconds is a few seconds of courage that can change your life. So sweet friends, muster up that initial energy, those few seconds of courage. And remember, everything you want is on the other side of that action. All right, I love you all so much. Have a fabulous week.

**Vanessa** 12:09

He's sweet friends. If you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us in the journey. It's my all inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at [Vanessa Calderon md.com](http://VanessaCalderon.md.com) forward slash join. I'll see you there.