

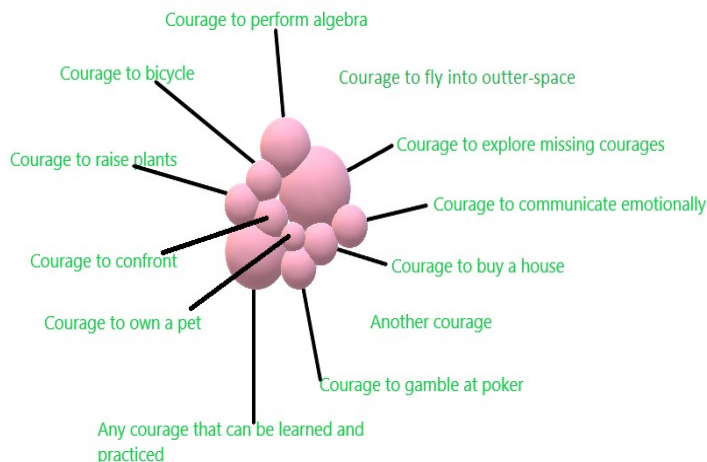
The Traditional Courage Model

(where the courage to do anything is from the same pool of courage to do everything)



The Independent Courage Model

(where each courage is developed when wanted or needed)



Chapter 2 – The Courage comes later

Growing up I am a crappy baseball player (left field), a crappy basketball player (first cut), in fact, I don't hit the tennis ball against brick walls all that well. One of the most embarrassing things I do is go to the batting cage with a group of shipmates and hit zero of thirty consecutive balls that the machine pitches. Not only do I not want training or practice in baseball after that, I am lucky I don't need courage in baseball, but unlucky that my initial un-coordination and clumsiness go unnoticed.

I don't believe in 'courage genes,' I believe in astronauts. It takes quite a while before I see a documentary on astronauts, where I hear that faith in their training and practice are the major ingredients in an astronaut's bravery; in their willingness to go where a 911 call will not do a bit of good, there is no rescue possible, and the situation is guaranteed to be pure do-or-die. What this means to me is that courage is subject dependant (like the subject of *the courage to fly into space*), so simply calling someone courageous means leaving some words out; which subjects are they courageous in?

I get bravery and courage mixed up all the time, like the words religion and faith. I gain my intangible *faith* by practicing the actions

of my *religion* – religions are the calisthenics of faith, the exercise that helps faith (sometimes “as tiny as a mustard seed”) grow so much that I don’t have to repeatedly look for faith. It follows that I can practice intangible *courage* with acts of *bravery* – brave actions are the calisthenics of courage, the exercise that helps courage (sometimes “as tiny as a mustard seed”) grow so much that I don’t have to repeatedly look to find my courage in some subject.

Confucius suggests that the purpose of falling down is to earn the reward found in rising up again. In popular culture, George Clooney’s 1999’ *Three Kings* movie character helps another character find courage by explaining that courage is a reward for an act, rather than a prerequisite for an act – that the courage comes later. As a survivor of groups of depressive days, I end a tortuous cycle of waiting to feel good enough to do better by becoming sure that I need to quit waiting for the right feeling before acting; my definition of depression is *forgetting that the action comes first and before the feeling*; it is what I do that dictates how I feel, and what I do next that will dictate how I feel next.

What I do need courage in is getting out of bed and the basic skills of being alive. I have let myself get that beat-down. I allow worry and anxiety to rule over me and constipate nearly every thought I need for too many of my decisions. The menacing thing about my broken brain is that it still hasn’t ejected the thought that it is broken yet, much less offered some solutions.

My diagnosis turns into a cognitive stool-softener. Out of this, I end up with a courage-building subject that I can start to learn and practice with, to grow my ‘life skills’ mustard seed, and to start seeing where I might plant more seeds later.

I can learn, train, and practice until I feel brave enough, and then do the things that are brave to me at the time. The key comes to me after I relate that faith is to religion, as courage is to bravery, and as life is to action; that a meaningful life with faith and courage is possible, but it will come later, after the deeds, so I need to find the courage to learn and practice things well – and learn calm patience too.