

Chalice Lighting: When I dare to use my strength in the service of my vision, it becomes less and less and important whether I am afraid. -Audre Lorde

Check-in: *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Intro: Courageous people change the world. So many names fall easily from our lips: Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela. The list goes on and on. We rightly honor such giants. But the problem is most of us aren't that tall. Or are we?

Here's what we have to help each other remember: In addition to the heroic acts that alter history, there are also the daily choices that prevent history from altering us! Bending the arc of the universe toward justice deserves praise, but so does the ordinary work of integrity and not allowing yourself to be bent.

We need to make room on the stage for these common acts of courage. The bravery of embracing your beauty even when it doesn't fit the air-brushed images surrounding us. The courage of calling out microaggressions that occur daily for many of us. Turning down that drink one day at a time. Making yourself get out of bed when depression tells you to stay. Holding your partner's hand in public.

So don't worry so much if you haven't changed the world yet. Stop comparing ourselves with the giants. Our work rests less in looking up to them and more in looking over at each other. And in remembering that others are also looking over at us.

Spiritual Exercise: My Teacher: Fear

Fear is a teacher. Don't skip class. - Anonymous

Fear serves us well. Evolutionarily, it is what protected us from that tiger in the bushes. Its function has been to point out threats that need to be destroyed or run away from.

But as many wise ones tell us, that is not the whole picture. Sometimes - possibly most times - fear isn't a threat; it's a teacher. Sometimes it isn't pointing to something that needs destroyed, but something that needs to be understood. Sometimes it's not a danger to what we value most, but a reflection of what we value most. Sometimes what serves us best is to see it, not as a caution sign, but as a clue.

So this month, let's try to make this shift to connecting to fear as a clue and a teacher. Simply put, your task this month is to **find the fear that is trying to teach you something!**

Here are your instructions:

- **Dig In:** Start by reading a little bit and learning how others have reframed their understanding of fear. Three articles we suggest can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

- **List a Bunch:** Spend some time listing the biggest fears in your life *currently*. Don't analyze at this point; just list.
- **Narrow it Down:** With your takeaways from the articles in your head, read through your list of fears and pick *the one* that feels most like it has something to teach you. This is a gut thing. Figuring out if a fear is a threat or a teacher is a tricky thing. Let your brain do some of the work, but be sure to lean into your intuition.
- **Identify the Lesson:** This is where the work becomes a spiritual practice. With intention and imagination, put yourself in a different headspace and relate to your fear as a teacher, clue, or even an open door. Ask yourself questions such as: What lesson is this fear trying to teach me? How is this fear a clue about a "[helpless part of me](#) that never got their needs met"? What unaddressed need or hunger is underneath this fear?

Questions:

1. What fears did your family of origin pass on to you?
2. What is the greatest act of courage that you directly witnessed? And how did it change you?
3. Where are you saying "yes" when you need to courageously say "no"?
4. Is comfort luring you away from courage?
5. Is fear making your world too small?

Quotes for Inspiration

If you possess enough courage to speak out what you are, you will find you are not alone. [Richard Wright](#)

White supremacy culture's number one strategy is to make us afraid. When we are afraid, we lose touch with our power and are more easily manipulated by any promise of safety. [Tema Okun](#)

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Do not be afraid.
Frederick Buechner

Courage, it turns out, isn't one dramatic leap. It's the daily, unglamorous decision to keep authoring your own life instead of accepting the draft everyone else already wrote for you.
[Leena Wilde Ryan](#)

It takes courage ... to endure the sharp pains of self-discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.
Marianne Williamson

Sitting in Silence: *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Sharing/Deep Listening: *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection and Gratitude *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

Extinguishing the Chalice Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow. -*Mary Anne Radmacher*