**Courage**

By Lex U., North Stonington, CT

There are many different types of courage that are called for in life. The courage that David displayed in challenging Goliath, the courage that Cal Ripken Jr. showed in his pursuit of the streak of consecutive games played, or Christopher Reeve's courage in pushing on. There is another kind of courage that involves doing the right thing, and this can be the biggest challenge of all.

When one of my dearest friends just died, I was asked if I would say something at the service. What made this particularly hard was that this friend was an adult; an adult with a child's heart and sense of humor. This made it that much harder, because not only was there love, but the deepest, utmost respect. I was hesitant because of the pressure and emotions that would be thrown on me that day, yet it was those emotions that pushed me to do it. My respect and love was so deep that it would have been a disgrace had I not expressed them.

And on that day I stepped to the podium and fought my tears to deliver the eulogy. It was probably the hardest thing I've ever done, and I could have easily declined the request and no one would have known, but I couldn't go through life knowing I didn't stand up for a friend. No one may have known that I didn't have the courage, except the ones who matter most; me and Mr. Crowe. I will forever remember what I did for him, and I think the most comforting thought is that Mr. Crowe will never forget it either.

Source:

U., Lex. “Courage.” *Teen Ink.* Emerson Media. Web. 30 Oct. 2015.

**Wisdom and Courage**

Unknown

   Nearly eight years ago my mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, marking the beginning of a long and exhausting four-year battle that would eventually take her life. My mother's illness and death was a traumatic time for my family, but those who knew her were transformed by her courage, strength and sheer determination to make the best of her impossible situation. I am forever changed by my mother's strength of character, appreciation for life and optimism in the face of overwhelming odds.  
  
When diagnosed, my mother, Anne, chose to confront the disease with a courage I had never seen in her. An inquisitive person, she researched treatments until she could talk as an equal with her doctors. Facing surgery and chemotherapy with unwavering strength became a matter of pride for her. Even at the age of ten, I knew that she had a remarkable inner strength and determination to live that I strive to imitate to this day. Though chemotherapy made her quite ill, my mother made a conscious effort to continue to be a normal wife, mother and friend. She would not allow herself, nor those close to her, to give in to fear or failure. She went to great lengths to instill in me her love and appreciation for life, and for that I am thankful.  
  
After struggling with chemotherapy for almost two years, my mother's determination was rewarded with one-and-a-half years of remission. During this time my mother increased her community activities and was able to fulfill her lifelong dream of traveling to Greece and England. With renewed vigor, my mother used this time to live life to the fullest.   
  
The happiness my mother experienced during this time came to an abrupt end when the cancer returned. Even with chemotherapy and radiation, it quickly became apparent that the treatments were not working. My once-optimistic mother fell into deep despair. With tremendous inner strength, she diagnosed herself as clinically depressed and immediately sought treatment. Coming to terms with her inevitable death, my mother studied how to prepare herself and her family for the loss. Though she was very ill, my mother did her best to live life until the end.  
  
After my mother's death, I tried to emulate her strength, courage and appreciation for life to help me come to terms with the tremendous loss. To the very end, she did her best to remain cheerful, mainly for her family and friends. It is my mother's selfless inner strength that has perhaps had the most impact on me. Faced with death, she chose to prepare and comfort those around her rather than be overcome with fear. I will always remember my mother's wisdom and courage, and I will do my best to make her proud.

Source:

“ Wisdom and Courage.” *Teen Ink.* Emerson Media. Web. 30 Oct. 2015.

**A True Test of Courage**

By Zachary C., Cameron, WI

Atticus Finch (in To Kill a Mockingbird) said: “Courage is when you know you’re licked before you begin, but you begin anyway, and you see it through no matter what.”

I thought about those words as I lay on the mat, attempting to breathe, trying to hold back tears. Once again I had lost, and I felt horrible.

It wasn’t like anyone was watching me get pummeled. But those kicks to my shins, those punches to my already swollen eyes, those knees to my solar plexus all made me feel horrible for not being as good as I wanted to be. That’s what brought the tears.

Disappointment, not the pain, stung my swelling eyes.

Ding.

“You good to go?” my opponent mumbled, his voice almost dripping with the pity he felt for the bruised, sweating lump of meat that just happened to be me. “You know, you can take a break if you want.”

Great! I just got my butt whipped by a nice guy! How humiliating!

“Naw, I’m good,” I lied, getting up on shaky knees, knowing I would soon be on my back again for the millionth time.

Hands up, sweating, barely breathing, throwing weak jabs that didn’t connect, I continued my feeble attempt to defend myself. The worst part was that my opponent wasn’t even trying. Shaking his head, obviously perplexed at why anyone as miserable as me would purposely step onto a mixed martial arts mat, he just threw a few weak combos that made me even more tired.

The worst thing was that he was taking pity on me; not trying but still hurting me, inside and out.

A kick to my already gone knees, and down I went, again.

Ding. Ding.

“You all right?” he asked, holding his hand out to help me up.

“Yup, I’m okay,” I lied again as I was helped up by the guy who just knocked me even lower into the pit of my despair.

“Hey, Zach, you good to go a round with me?” Randy, the instructor, called to me.

“Yeah, let’s go.”

Ding.

We touched gloves, both of us dripping sweat even before we began. I threw some jabs, barely hurting him. He threw a huge kick to my leg; it went numb with pain, and I almost fell.

“Keep your hands up,” Randy said as he popped me in the nose.

Pain throbbed in my nose and my legs as I put my hands up, trying to protect my already bruised and battered face. Panting, huffing, grunting, I kept getting battered by his onslaught of punches, kicks, knees, and elbows, trying not to fall or slip on the sweaty mats.

He rushed me, grabbing my head in a Muy Thai clinch, and I almost passed out from the pain when he threw his knees into me. With the wind knocked out of me and barely conscious, I dropped my hands and he popped me in the nose again.

I felt tears coming as I tried to breathe, to control the pain, to stay ­conscious.

“Come on … fight. Come at me,” Randy goaded, trying to get me mad enough to fight, and succeeding.

I charged at him and threw what I thought were big punches, but he blocked them and threw me to the mat. I grunted as he landed on top of me and tried to protect myself as he rained down punches and elbows.

My god, what did I get myself into? I thought I was better than this. Maybe I should just stop and lie in a corner, curled up in the fetal position.

“Protect yourself. Fight back. Pull my head down,” Randy instructed me.

I grabbed his head and pulled it down to my chest so he couldn’t hit me.

“Good, now pound the crap outta my head,” he yelled.

As soon as I began to pound his head, the bell sounded.

Ding. Ding.

“All right, that’s good for today,” Randy said as he helped me up. “You did good. I hope you’ll stick with this and come back.”

“I’ll try,” I said as I put my shoes on and got ready to leave. I felt like my nose was running, but then I tasted blood.

As I left, I knew I had to go back or I would always feel like a loser. I had to prove that I could fight. I had to prove it – not to the guys, but to myself.

Anyone can win. That’s the easy part of competing. The real test is whether you go back when you know you won’t win. That’s the true test of courage.

Source:

C., Zachary. “A True Test of Courage.” *Teen Ink.* Emerson Media. Web. 30 Oct. 2015.

**How Malala Yousafzai's Courage Inspired a Nation: 'We Are No Longer Afraid'**

When the Taliban sent a gunman to kill a 15-year-old girl because she fought publicly for girls' education, they intended to instill fear in anyone who wanted to educate young Pakistani women.

The bullet missed her brain, and not only has Malala Yousafzai become an international symbol of inspiration and bravery, but her survival instilled educators with courage -- and is slowly helping make Pakistani schools safer.

"They thought that the bullets would silence us, but they failed," Malala said in a speech at the United Nations on her 16th birthday. "The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions. But nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born."

Northwest Pakistan, where Yousafzai lived and almost died, has been one of the most dangerous places on the planet to go to school -- especially for young girls. In 2010, Taliban threats ran so high, nearly 1,000 government and private schools closed and more than 120,000 girls lost access to school, according to UNICEF.

But today, education advocates argue that Yousafzai's survival -- combined with military offensives that eliminated Taliban safe havens -- reduced those threats. In surviving, Yousafzai inspired entire communities to protect their schools and passionately fight for a girl's right to be educated.

"The clear message that is being sent by government, individuals, by amazing people like Malala is that we are not going to stop fighting for education," Shirin Lutfeali, a specialist in education and literacy for Save the Children who works in Pakistan and across the region, told ABC News. "She has become a symbol of change: They are going to blow up schools, but we are no longer afraid."

That fearlessness was facilitated not only by Malala but also by the Pakistani military pushing out militants who targeted or took over schools. By 2012, after the military's operations, the number of schools destroyed dropped to 30, UNICEF said.

That is not to say the threats have ended. A 41-year-old teacher named Shahnaz Nazli was assassinated while standing next to her son in March, apparently because she was teaching girls in Khyber Agency, near the Afghan border.

In early September, a bomb exploded outside a girls' school in the northwestern town of Bannu, Pakistan, as classes ended, wounding 14. And in June, a bomb gutted a bus in the southwestern Pakistan town of Quetta, killing 14 female students. As long as the attacks continue, campaigners acknowledge they have to fight the fear that forces some parents to keep their daughters at home.

Nazli's death sparked a campaign by the U.N.'s special envoy for global education, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. He launched a petition demanding more protection for teachers and girls. Yousafzai and her father, Ziauddin, were the first to sign.

Brown said, "No one should be shot for wanting to go to school or wanting to teach girls."

Source:

Shifrin, Nick. “How Malala Yousafzai's Courage Inspired a Nation: 'We Are No Longer Afraid.’” *Abc news.com.* 7 Oct. 2013. Web. 30 Oct. 2015.