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The Courage Quotient: How Science Can Make You Braver

By Robert Biswas-Diener



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The Courage Quotient: How Science Can Make You Braver By Robert Biswas-Diener

The keys to understanding and developing courage

This groundbreaking book reveals that courage is more about *managing* fear than not feeling it, and that courage can be learned. The author explains that most courageous people are unaware of their own bravery, and all of us have some form of courage in our lives now, to start with. The book is filled with illustrative examples, studies, and interviews from Greenland to Kenya, and defines the types of individuals who demonstrate general, personal, and civil courage. The author includes clear guidelines and suggestions for increasing our ability to be courageous.

- Includes guidelines that show how anyone can ramp-up their courage quotient and develop the qualities that strengthen personal courage
- Contains a wealth of examples and anecdotes of real-world courage from a variety of cultures
- A prolific writer, the author has a popular blog *Psychology Today*

The author extols the virtues of personal courage and shows how to overcome fear and stand up for what is right.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Two courage lists from Robert Biswas-Diener, author of *The Courage Quotient*



Robert Biswas-Diener

Who has courage? A list of groups who have courage:

1. *Women*
Although bravery is, stereotypically, a masculine trait, women also show a wide variety of courage. Women have high rates of live organ donation, overseas volunteerism, and challenging advocacy roles.
2. *Executives*
In one study executives had lower rates of fear and a higher willingness to act than did police officers, fire fighters and other emergency personnel.
3. *People living near the Equator*
In an international survey people living near the Equator in countries such as Nigeria and Brazil had higher average rates of bravery than did their counterparts in Europe and North America.
4. *Whistle blowers*
It is risky to speak out against an injustice, especially when there might be negative personal consequences. One study reveals that people who will not participate in immorality are higher on empathy, higher on moral reasoning, and able to evaluate whether actions make sense in a given context.
5. *Everyone*
Although people normally think about dramatic acts of heroism when thinking about courage each of us has personal history of overcoming fear and anxiety. If you have ever gotten married, taken a new job, moved to a new city or had a child you have experienced an act of bravery.

Five ways to increase your own courage quotient:

1. *Appreciation*
When most people begin the process of self-improvement-whether that is trying to become happier or more courageous-they think about what they could do differently. This rush for "better" can sometimes cause folks to overlook the current successes in their lives. I recommend taking stock of the times you have already acted bravely: speaking p on the behalf of someone else, moving to a new job, getting married or having children, or overcoming a personal fear such as flying.

2. *Manage your fear.*

This is, seemingly, the most straightforward piece of advice related to courage. If fear holds you back then managing that fear opens up the potential for moving forward. Fear comes in different types and each is associated with a different solution. Fear of failure, for example, can be counterbalanced by taking stock of progress. The antidote to fear of rejection is to shift the focus from the self toward the situation.

Breathing and relaxation techniques can also be effective.

3. *Get angry.*

Many people avoid the emotion of anger because they feel it is destructive, and it certainly can be. Anger is also an emotion that helps us protect ourselves or those we care about when our rights are being threatened. One study shows that people in an angry mood were more optimistic about the outcomes of a risk. In essence, they were more courageous. Perhaps you have seen athletes similarly "psych themselves up" for a competition by getting angry.

4. *Get a lucky charm.*

People have a natural tendency to think magically; to believe in superstitions or luck or other phenomena that are not proven. You can leverage this natural tendency to your advantage where courage is concerned by adopting a personally meaningful lucky charm. One study showed that people who had a lucky charm outperformed others on memory and golf tasks! Interviews with courageous people yield the truth that many employ such a charm to boost their confidence in anxious situations.

5. *Embrace failure.*

Most people do not like failure because it stings, psychologically speaking. People naturally avoid failure and folks with a perfectionist leaning find it especially abhorrent. Mistakes and failure can be beneficial in that they make us more mindful, help us learn, offer us a chance to reflect, and make us appear more authentic to others. Instead of letting a fear of mistakes hold you back try embracing them. Small mistakes and low stakes failure are a part of life.

From the Inside Flap

Scientific studies confirm what most of us have suspected all along: that those who are bold enough to go after what they want enjoy greater success and happiness. Most of us think of courage as something that "you're either born with or you're not." But as Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener demonstrates in this illuminating and practical new book, most of us are more courageous than we realize—and bravery can be learned.

Biswas-Diener begins with the premise that courage is more about managing fear than not feeling it. As he shows, all of us display some form of bravery in our daily lives (in fact, studies reveal that women exhibit courage in higher numbers than men). He then goes on to describe the different types of people who demonstrate bravery, from general and individual courage to civil courage. Drawing on original research and his interviews with individuals from across the globe, Biswas-Diener helps readers raise their own "courage quotient," offering proven strategies to manage fear and boost the willingness to act.

This fascinating book shows how courage is viewed differently in various cultures, from Japan and Norway to Africa and Israel, and provides a wealth of compelling anecdotes that inspire personal insights for readers. Throughout the book, the author introduces concepts such as "courage blindness" and "personal courage" and puts the focus on the importance of magical thinking—as well as failure—in the bravery process. Readers will discover how to increase courage in their own personal lives (overcoming private fears like standing up to a bully or speaking up in a college lecture course) as well as in the public realm (standing up for what is right in the "face of fire," speaking truth to power, and taking appropriate financial risk).

From the Back Cover

Praise for The Courage Quotient

"Robert Biswas-Diener represents the great promise of modern-day exploration. As a trained scientist, he travels the world not to bring us yet another mundane geographical 'first' but rather studied insights that illuminate the human condition. In this book, he fuses the history and science of courage with a worldwide exploration of the topic to distill a consummately useful handbook on the topic. It belongs on the bookshelves of companies seeking to cultivate more courageous employees, of parents who'd like to see smarter, braver kids, and indeed, of anyone wanting to understand and unleash their own inner courage."—Dan Buettner, fellow, National Geographic; New York Times best-selling author, *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest*

"A rare combination of rigorous scholarship and easy-to-follow recommendations, *The Courage Quotient* helps readers understand and cultivate one of the most understudied and underdeveloped virtues—courage. Robert Biswas-Diener's writing is witty, intelligent, accessible; you feel that you are sitting right there with him, having a fun and fascinating conversation about the causes, antecedents, and consequences of acting courageously and overcoming your fears."—Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD, professor of psychology, University of California, Riverside; author, *The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want*

"This is one of the finest statements made on what courage is, what obstacles get in the way, and how it can be cultivated. A perfect example of how meaningful, cutting-edge science can be translated into straightforward lessons on how to harness the strength of courage."—Todd B. Kashdan, PhD, professor of psychology, George Mason University; author, *Curious? Discover the Missing Ingredient to a Fulfilling Life and Designing Positive Psychology*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sally Watts:

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Sherman Etheridge:

Is it you actually who having spare time and then spend it whole day through watching television programs or just telling lies on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This *The Courage Quotient: How Science Can Make You Braver* can be the respond to, oh how comes? It's a book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your time by reading in this new era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

Jonathan Peterson:

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Carolyn Charles:

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