

“Afraid? Afraid of being too awesome.”

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“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?’ Actually, who are you *not* to be?”

The powerful words above are excerpted from a Marianne Williamson quote my mother had framed when I was moving away to college. Of all the things to pack, who knew such a quote is what a first generation college student needed most? This was my most prized possession that continues to impact and inspire me each and every day. How so? Because like many people, I forget things. I forget my job has the ability to impact others in a positive way. I forget my passion is rooted in the opportunity for a student to change their stars. This quote serves as a gentle reminder to ensure compassion for self. In a world continually telling someone they aren't enough, isn't it time we give ourselves a little grace?

When evaluating whether or not someone is successful in their work, it is easy for one to be hyper critical of themselves or of others. It can be daunting to continually see headlines, have conversation after conversation about conduct issues, or spend each day filled with the hope that your hours and tireless work are going to pay off in shifting the community, only to occasionally be pulled down into the muck of thinking: “What if none of this is working? If I was good at my job, wouldn't this have changed by now?” Such questions can serve as kindling for the fire within you, but it is important to not allow that fire to consume you. Every engine needs its fire, and such questions can fuel yours as you drive forward. Therefore, it is understandable to find oneself feeling afraid – afraid to fail and to let an employer down, to let your students down, or to even let yourself down.

What if you woke up each day afraid? But what if, instead of waking up afraid to fail, you were actually afraid you were going to break the mold on something and possibly change the world? What if you were afraid the most meaningful moment in your career was waiting for you behind the next door? Perhaps all it takes is a little shift on how one reads the definition of fear. Your deepest fear could be the typical battles one might face through issues within your community, or a conflict with other staff, or the desperate search for meaning in the field, but what if you feared something else entirely? What if you feared your own awesomeness? Why hold back from that fear?

The popular author and shame researcher, Brené Brown, has found the ultimate expression of courage is not through protecting yourself from the elements, from the job, from coworkers, or from students. The ultimate expression of courage is the frightening dare to be vulnerable. To tell someone you don't know the answer, or to ask the question when no one else is willing to, or to tell someone you aren't perfect. In shifting one's personal definition for fear and failure, you can uncover the courage and greatness within you. Courage is showing up as a consultant when you don't know what is waiting for you on the other side of the door to the chapter

house. Courage is showing up to an interview when you know you are going to have to answer some hard questions. Courage is taking the intentional moment to let a student know their leadership means something to you and they are worth your time. Courage is going home at whatever hour of the night after the last executive board meeting drained and saying, "it's okay, let's have another go tomorrow." Courage is being willing to fail, and fail hard.

There is a quote by Clive James in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Big Magic*, a book about how being curious can lead to a more creative life, where she shares the truest purpose of failing. It says, "*Failure has a function. It asks you whether you really want to go on making things.*" What if you were lucky that you failed instead of succeeded? Don't be afraid to remind yourself you can do it. You are intelligent. You ARE awesome. Don't let your awesomeness be so intimidating that even you want to hide it from the world. Because if there is one thing I'm certain of, it is that we need more awesome in the world if we are going to be able to change it.

You can do it.

References

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