

Sandra Walston Urges Women To Own Courage!

Jill H. Lawrence

Courage coach, Sandra Ford Walston, totally understands why the Cowardly Lion in the 1939 classic film, “The Wizard of Oz,” was so desperately searching for courage. “We all dream of Oz. Courage is a valuable commodity,” Walston points out. “Those who own courage and recognize it in themselves operate at the next level. This makes life infinitely easier.”

Of course, the Lion in question actually had a tremendous reservoir of courage but was unable to see that truth about himself. Walston, in addition to being a courage coach, is also a popular keynote speaker, corporate trainer, and author of *COURAGE—The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman/ Reclaiming the Forgotten Virtue*. “That’s often the case, especially for women,” she explains. Holding onto our courage takes hard work. Walston delicately wove Dorothy’s journey to find her own truth throughout her book.

Every human must call upon inner courage many times throughout a typical lifetime. Walston points out that some well recognized people are known for their courage—people who have made sweeping contributions to societies and cultures, such as George Washington, Martin Luther King, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Some, like Christopher Reeves and Lance Armstrong, are hailed for personal courage in confronting great odds.

Men are often courageous, but what about women?

“My personal research has revealed that most famous heroes are men, not women. Why? Probably because women have been socialized to believe that courage, like power, is simply not meant to be part of the feminine nature,” Walston explains.

Think of the courage that Dorothy exhibited throughout her trip to Oz. “She never gave up, even when she fell asleep in the poppy field. Continuing on the road of uncertainty, she forged ahead,” Walston muses. For that matter, think of the tremendous heart the Scarecrow revealed and the superior “brainy” thinking the Tin man contributed. Each had the very trait they thought they were searching for; the problem was they just didn’t own it.

When Frank L. Baum wrote *The Wizard of Oz*, it was unthinkable to ascribe courage and power to a woman. Dorothy happily discovered at the end of her journey the power was within her all along. But think of the trials and tribulations Dorothy could have avoided if she hadn’t believed that the power lay outside herself in some mythical Wizard! Thankfully, she eventually “saw the light” and reclaimed her courage and her power.

Like Dorothy, Walston says it’s been commonplace for women to overlook courage, to fail to see their need for it, or their personal demonstration of it. “Not unexpectedly, my research and personal experience revealed that women who do own courage are much better equipped to deal with everyday life than those who do not,” she emphasizes.

Real women claim real courage

Walston instituted a survey of 700 women to assess their courage quotient. Time after time she was inspired by many of the women who demonstrated a firm grasp of courage in their daily lives. Early in Walston’s life she recognized how she verified her own personal

courage. It was often required as she sometimes skipped, sometimes slogged down the yellow brick road of life.

In the late sixties, Walston discovered she was pregnant and not in love with the baby's father. She mustered tremendous courage to get through the pregnancy. "I was a Catholic, unmarried, and pregnant at age twenty," she remembers. Like many women of that time, she suffered the pregnancy alone and in humiliating silence. Often she vomited into gutters on her way to college classes and entered the lecture room in a nauseated haze.

It likewise took tremendous courage for Walston to put the welfare of her baby ahead of her own. Her decision to find a "good Catholic family" for him to be raised in was the right thing to do, but torturous to her soul. The experience left an indelible mark. Not surprisingly, Walston's book is dedicated to her son: "Dedicated to David. Always loved, never forgotten."

Courage became a common thread in Walston's life. She confidently transitioned careers from education, real estate, private banking, consulting and training, and finally speaking, writing, and publishing. She demonstrated courage in her personal life as well. She left her family, friends, career, and the home she loved to move to Colorado with her fiancé, only to be unceremoniously "dumped" five months later. "I had no friends, no family and only knew the area in a mile-and-a-half radius around where I was living. I didn't know what I was going to do. One thing I did know how to do was to make lemonade out of water."

It was from this experience that a defining moment arose and a crystallization of an insight surfaced to her: she was to write a book about women and courage. "I had to reinvent myself one more time and draw upon my ever-growing reservoir of courage!" During that sad and lonely period, a voice told me that if I could weather the melancholy and loneliness, a revelation would come to me," Walston exults.

The voice said, "Something good will come..."

Walston's connection with Spirit has been an ever-present part of her life, so when the voice came to her, it came as an old friend. "The voice said 'something good will come out of this horrible situation'," she remembers. "The insight shed light on my purpose by revealing how I use courage as a feminine energy."

Walston knew she was going to experience a spiritual transformation, but she didn't quite know what that was going to look like. Earlier in her life, she experienced some great spiritual teachers. She was living in West Los Angeles when Louise Hay moved there from New York and began holding lectures long before she wrote her first book. And none other than Marianne Williamson taught *A Course in Miracles* to a small group in a rented church on Sunday evenings. "They were wonderful. You could feel they were coming from a place of true authenticity. They were clearly living their purpose and their passion. They both contributed so much to my spiritual growth. It was a wonderful blessing for me to be one of the many participants in their journey."

She had the courage to face her greatest fears

Walston says the two things in her life that required ultimate courage were the giving up of her son for adoption and embarking on a writing career. She had a lot of fear around being a writer. She preferred to express herself through her public speaking. Yet, her courage

enabled her to face that fear and get on with a writing career. “I’m very intuitive and a lot of insights come to me in my sleep or when I’m driving in my car. Many times I was guided in my approach to the structure of the content. This helped me hurdle the arduous task of narrowing my message,” she admits. Help comes from above. “I get messages—whether it’s my guardian angel, God, goddesses—whatever name, Spirit comes to me and I receive the direction. It is the green light that keeps me going. I know when these insights come in I have to write them down right away; otherwise, even though I tell myself I’ll remember, I know new flashes of inspiration will overload my memory banks and I’ll forget!”

Walston reports she’s been guided along the way, not only to write and design the book’s layout, but also to become transformed from her own lessons and destiny. “I stay very open and receptive to receiving insights and place enormous value on them. I do not pooh-pooh them in any way. It’s an ongoing process for me, not just for writing a book, but for how I live my life.”

Just as Dorothy has inspired countless folks with her journey along the Yellow Brick Road, Walston also ignites inspiration in women wherever she goes. It’s because she’s the real deal—the personification of courage. You can hear it in her voice, see it in her eyes, and receive the courage of her heart. She’s lived it and breathed it. Walston inspires other women to reclaim their own courage as well. You can just hear the Cowardly Lion roar with approval!

SANDRA FORD WALSTON is national speaker, seminar leader, executive/ courage coach, and author. Her first book, *COURAGE: The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman/ Reclaiming the Forgotten Virtue*, won the Colorado Independent Publishers Association 2000 award and was on *The Denver Post* bestseller list for over five months. Endorsed by Marianne Williamson, Jack Canfield, Neale Donald Walsch, and Harriet Rubin, Broadway Books, a division of Random House, proudly publishes *COURAGE* in hard cover. She instructs at Colorado Society of CPAs and is a member of the National Speakers Association and the Colorado Speakers Association. Ms. Walston is certified in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Enneagram.

303.762.1010 fax 303.762.1011

swalston@walstoncourage.com

www.walstoncourage.com

Jill H. Lawrence is host of Jill & Friends on Wisdom Radio six days a week. She is a journalist and speaker, and she can be reached at rubyslipp@aol.com.

Copyright 2000-2001 Sandra Ford Walston. All Rights Reserved.