

## Chapter 9: QUANTUM PARTS COURAGE

Courage is a mystery to most people. Courage is often the fuel you need to express yourself honestly and behave with integrity, and yet few people seem capable of understanding how this fuel is generated or resourced. As we've already discussed, too many people sit around waiting for courage to hit them before they engage in valuable acts. Through the concept of courage, we often see demonstrated one of the most toxic of all modern beliefs: Courage is a brave feeling that is a prerequisite to bold honest behaviour. As described in the earlier chapters – you wait to feel good before you do the right thing. Let's recap on this belief before we diver deeper into courage.

You will often feel sensations that you relate to as “fear” when you're faced with the challenging opportunity to live more truthfully. These are sometimes obvious sensations, such as tightening of the torso muscles, hypersensitive vision and hearing, nausea, increased heart rate, sweaty palms, and other powerful feelings attributed to anxiety. Other times, fear is subtler, such as a loss of motivation, feeling “too busy”, or forgetting that you wanted to do it. When such sensations occur to most people, they escape to a room inside their head, cringing quietly to themselves, waiting impatiently for the sensations and associated “negative” thoughts to pass before they can hope to engage in behaviour.

This was me for much of my life. I would wait to feel brave before asking out the girl I liked (hence why it was such a rare event). I would wait to feel safe and trusting with someone before I would reveal my insecurities to them. I would wait to feel assertively frustrated before standing up to someone who crossed my boundaries, which usually meant a few hours or days of sulking, eventually followed by a squeaky-voiced mini-tantrum. There was a pattern: Waiting to feel brave before engaging in a courageously honest action.

Does this resonate with you? Are you right now waiting on a feeling of bravery to do something you know you should do, like start a business, end a relationship, or travel abroad?

After many years of suffering the inevitably endless procession of missed opportunities because of this cowardly approach to honest action, I had a deeper look at my beliefs. I started to notice some exceptions to the rule. For example, the first time I ever went on stage with a band to perform, I was shaking with stage-fright. We were all untalented 13-year-old wannabe-rockstars. We'd painted our faces and were facing a large audience of students and their parents, to perform a Marilyn Manson cover, no less. Sure, we got the timing wrong, and for about 15 embarrassing seconds I dropped the microphone and couldn't get it sorted, but we got through it relatively well and delivered our debut performance.

The lesson I learned, through exceptional examples like this, is that *I didn't feel brave before taking the action*. The feeling of courage only appeared during or even after the action was taken. I started experimenting more with this over time. I noticed that while I might be close to vomiting with anxiety-based nausea when I walked up to a stranger to talk with them, *after* the conversation was done a sense of power would flow through my body. Sometimes this feeling would occur quickly, like right after I spoke my first few words. After initiating conversations with strangers five times in a row, I would usually then experience what I later dubbed “Bulletproof Mode”; a sense of having absolutely zero fear-related sensations or thoughts, and feeling almost narcissistically capable of anything without hesitation.

All our lives we've been subtly conditioned to believe that you need to feel a certain motivational emotional state before you can hope to engage in honest action; to feel good to do the right thing. We were lied to! The truth – which my clients and I have tested beyond measure – is the exact opposite: You need to do what's courageous before you can feel brave. Or, more accurately:

*Behaving courageously, through choosing to engage in an honest action while feelings sensations of fear, is how you create feelings of bravery.*

You must take the authentic action you're afraid to take, which means *willingly choosing to increase your fear symptoms*, if you hope to live by the value of courage and experience the rewarding internal thoughts and sensations we often refer to as bravery. Simplistic as this sounds, many people can agree with this concept rationally and yet fail to act on it, continuing to wait for the brave feeling to occur. The key is in understanding that there is no cheat-code or shortcut available here; *if you want to live with courage there is no way to avoid feeling afraid*. The painful truth is that courage can only be experienced through choosing to feel more fear.

You may see this as cliché and obvious, but are you living by it? Do you deliberately say to yourself on a daily basis, "Well, it's high time I chose to feel anxious today, what can I do to shit myself a little?" I'm guessing not. If you're like most people, you'll happily repost a quote on your social media page about how courage requires fear, but when it comes to the real-life crunch you usually sit in that waiting room hoping that the anxious sensations, or apathetic lack of motivation, will pass.

I get it, I do. While I noticed that bravery was a rewarding situation for engaging in courageous acts, for a long time I still struggled to decode exactly *how* I was able to move myself into action while feeling afraid. It was like the times I could make myself go to the gym when I *really* didn't want to. How was I able to accomplish that? At first, the word "willpower" was what I used to describe it. Yet on further inspection I found that I was often *unwilling* to take these actions, despite being able to force myself to do them.

### **Breaking it down into tiny steps – Quantum Parts Courage**

During my Pick Up Artist days, when I was learning how to talk to strangers on the street, I learned an helpful and extremely simple mindset-reframe to aide my attempts, which was to just "follow your feet". Instead of getting all locked inside your head about the millions of potentially terrifying predicted outcomes of going up to a stranger and talking to them, you redirect your focus to your shoes and literally watch them walk, one step at a time, toward the person you're interested in. Once you're there, look up at the person's face, open your mouth, and allow sound to come out.

The essential foundation to this approach is to break down the seemingly big and overwhelming action of talking to a stranger into tiny parts, refocusing your attention on your own behaviour and bodily sensations. Instead of talking to a stranger, you're simply stepping with your left foot, and then your right, and then your left again, and so on. Each step is an accomplishment in and of itself, and the concept of "talking to a stranger" dissolves into tiny actions that are – and this bit is important – *entirely manageable* by themselves.

After some testing and refinement, I started calling this process *Quantum Parts Courage*. "Quantum" – as in quantum physics – means the smallest observable piece of something. A person, say, is a large complicated object, but if you break a person down into their quantum parts, you're left with pieces of behaviour and physical aspects. These smaller things are far more manageable to work with than an entire human, who as a complex combination of these things is ultimately

unpredictable, hard to categorise accurately, and beyond understanding. A single piece of behaviour, however, can be observed, measured and analysed for helpful in-the-moment analysis.

I finally came to realise that the “follow your feet” method revealed the deeper code behind courageous behaviour; a blueprint for bravery. See, *anyone* can handle a bit of fear and behave with courage, but we all have fluctuating limits. There’s a certain level of fear – subject to context and changing every second – that we feel unable to accept or overcome. We simply can’t act when we’re too afraid, and this is the issue preventing most people from engaging in courageously honest behaviour. The trick, therefore, is to be able to break down any process of behaviour into tiny molecules small enough to stay below the line of “too much.”

Some days I have a high fear tolerance, like the time I bungy-jumped over 100 metres, or the time I told off the District Manager at Corrections, or the first time I directly told a girl I wanted to have sex with her without knowing if she even liked me. Other days, I barely have enough courage to try doing pull-ups during my workout, in case someone is counting my reps and judges me as weak. (Who would even do this? The mind is so bizarre.) So, at any given time what I need to do is make sure I’m able to: a) identify how much fear I can tolerate during the current process, and b) refocus my attention on action-steps during that process that are smaller than my current fear tolerance limit.

Putting it simply; I must break down the “big” categorical action into “little” individual pieces of behaviour that I can emotionally handle doing right now.

Your problem isn’t that you are cowardly. Your problem is that you perceive tasks to seem bigger than they truly are. I believe your fear is the creator of this misperception, because it’s such an effective way to manipulate you into avoiding something. If your fear makes something like starting a business look like one gigantic, impossibly-overwhelming action, then you’ll never get started. You’ve effectively been scared away from taking even a small, exploratory first step. But if starting a business is broken down into tiny steps, the first being something like “list 10 things you might be interested in doing”, and you’re under absolutely no obligation to complete any actions other than that first tiny goal, suddenly it’s not so scary. Sure, there’s still a bit of fear there – as I mentioned, this is unavoidable – but it is a *manageable* amount only; you can handle the amount of fear needed to complete this small task.

### **Courage is wisdom, not balls**

Cowardice isn’t a lack of courage; it’s a faulty perspective. It’s imagining the combination of a thousand tiny actions as being one big conglomerate super-action. Fear adds together all the combined effort of those tiny actions and presents them to you inside your mind, all at once, making it seem impossible. This leads you to believe others who do it are somehow stronger, braver and smarter than you, because they’re achieving what seems impossible to you. In turn, this confirms your belief that you are less than others, and so you become even more afraid of taking action because now you don’t trust yourself to be good enough. What a vicious pattern! And worst of all, there’s no truth to any of it.

You might think running a 40 kilometre marathon sounds impossible, but that running 100 metres is totally feasible and causes you almost no performance anxiety. A marathon is simply repeating that 100 metre run 400 times, something you are probably capable of, yet if you look at it all lumped together it’s too much for your mind to believe (until you’ve done a few marathons). You’ll find

many long-distance runners have a mantra-like running process that allows them to focus their attention separately on *every individual step*. They at their core that the next step is the only thing that is real, controllable and manageable, and that focusing on this gives them the courage to keep going.

This approach can be applied to any fearful situation you can think of. Giving a public speaking presentation seems impossible to someone with a fear of it, yet walking up the steps to the stage is manageable. Once you're there, walking across to the microphone is also doable, though of course there are anxiety sensations occurring more than usual. But these are just heartbeats, beads of sweat, and tensing muscles. All completely manageable bites of experience and sensation. "Being anxious" is too much to handle, but broken down into its parts there's no single element of anxiety that is beyond your ability to handle (and even enjoy).

Breaking things down into Quantum Parts will help you – it's a form of active in-the-moment desensitisation to fear. It takes practice. You can train yourself in normal everyday activities. Try breaking down showering, doing the dishes, or setting boundaries with your partner into small steps, even if you're not particularly afraid of the task. Teach yourself to see that nothing is bigger than a tiny action, and your courage to face any process of tiny actions will increase.

Quantum Parts is only part of the puzzle behind what courage is made of. To help you live by the value of courage strongly, I must also speak of another key element to courage: The ability to quit.

### Freeing Yourself from Achievement

All our lives we are told we need to win and succeed. Failure is seen as, well, a failure; something wrong which needs to be fixed and corrected. And when it comes to courage versus cowardice, failure is often attributed to the idea of quitting. We're all conditioned to think backing out of a process before it is completed – usually something we see as a single big task – is cowardly and will get us kicked out of the tribe, humiliated beyond recovery. We think only losers quit.

When you take this into account, you can see clearly why we're all so cowardly. In the previous section, we talked about how we group together a lot of tasks, a process, into a single massive unachievable task. Now you can see that once we've done that, we dump a big pile of pressure on ourselves to complete the *entire* massive list of tasks/single big task, or otherwise be deemed a loser in the eyes of society. From this ungodly coupling, procrastination is born.

How can you expect to get started on something when you view it as both impossible to complete and impossible to quit once begun? *Of course* your brain will repel away from such a pointless endeavour. It makes total sense to procrastinate on something so unachievable; from your mind's perspective, there is absolutely nothing to be gained from such an experience, it's a suicide mission. You're asking yourself to finish something you believe can't be finished.

The trouble is that both of these beliefs are just incorrect, as you can probably see. Firstly, no task is too big to accomplish, because every process is simply a series of micro quantum-tasks that you are totally capable of. Secondly, no process cannot be stopped once it's started, as you're free to quit after any quantum task. There are no physical phenomena in the world that force you to complete a process you've engaged in, whether it's starting a business, asking someone out, or going to the gym. Each of these *processes* are simply a series of hundreds or even thousands of micro-actions, and at the completion of any of these tiny milestone actions along the way you have the full freedom and right to completely *bail out!*

We are told that you must not give yourself the option of backing out, otherwise you won't have the drive to achieve great things. Do you believe this? I certainly did. I was firmly told, in so many ways, that commitment and loyalty to completing a process are required in for success. Little did I know; the opposite is true. Commitment and loyalty only creates pressure, inflating a process of small tasks until they appear to be one giant difficult task, which eventually tempts us to quit.

You might think that starting your own business is a single massive action, aligned with your values, so therefore you must keep going once you start – committed to succeed or die trying. But how can you be sure if you haven't tried it yet? What if it turns out you enjoy life more as an employee, and would rather dedicate your energy to other pursuits? You won't know until you hit some key task *during the process of microtasks* – one that enlightens you to the truth about how you feel. As I pursued the various microtasks associated with starting my business, I regularly checked in with myself and asked, "Is this still right for me?" I attribute this strategy to successfully getting me through times I wanted to quit, rather than demotivating me like everyone told me it would.

You think you quit goals/processes because you weren't dedicated, lacked willpower and courage, and didn't commit yourself fully. I say bullshit. You probably quit *because* you pressured yourself to finish the whole thing without having permission to bail out. If you had had the freedom to leave at any time, you'd have none of that success-pressure on your shoulders, and therefore every small action in the process would be a conscious unforced choice, which of course you're far more likely to follow through with. We don't want to be slaves, even to ourselves; we want to be leaders who make decisions. Any coach will tell you; as soon as you start trying to force someone to take action, they'll actively work against it, even if it's good for them.

You can see this in marriage. I believe the issue with divorce rates these days is not that people aren't committed, it's because they *are*! You wake up one day and look at your partner, who, perhaps, you're just not totally loving today, and suddenly think, "Oh shit, I have to stay with this person for the rest of my life, and that means *decades* of this feeling I'm having right now!" So you panic and do something stupid, like cheating or impulsive divorce. Compare this to a person who sees marriage as simply a partnership that has no guaranteed future, and who knows that it's always their choice to stay or go, the relationship is taken one day at a time. On a morning such as this, they would probably just say to their partner something like, "I'm feeling weird today, I think I need some time to myself" and get over the minor blip in motivation just fine.

This can be demonstrated by another little tactic I learned called, "Just run as far as you want to". Let's say you're going for a jog. Rather than putting pressure on yourself to run five kilometres, which you might not feel like doing today, just break it down to the smallest quantum part of running – like putting on your shoes and leaving the house – and then run as much as you want. Run for the sake of running, rather than reaching a goal. I tried this myself. Some days I would run more than five k's, other days I could only do a few hundred metres, but I ran almost every time I planned to! This was far more successful than when I pressured myself to run specified distances, *and* it helped me clearly realize that I hate running and needed to find a new way to exercise.

Instead of "go talk to her," you can start walking towards her and go as far as you want to, with full permission to bail at any time, and no definitive finish line for what talking to her looks like. Maybe it's just three steps in her direction, maybe it's a full-on conversation and asking her out, or maybe it's just making simple eye contact with a smile. The key is you'll do *something*, which is so much more than what most people do. More opportunities will become available to you and your courage will grow with increased experience over time.

Doing *something* ensures you build up a pain-tolerance for fearful sensations, as well as a touch of helpful frustration. When you don't do anything, you just feel like a loser and become even more pressured to take action, and by association more afraid. The little task starts to become a monster. Conversely, when you take any number of small actions in the process, with full permission to bail out, you become more experienced with fearful sensations (and therefore grow an ever-increasing baseline of courage), and you get tempted to take it further because you see missed opportunities more clearly. Frustration *is* motivation.

What are you still reading for? Go do something small right now! Stop fucking around with overwhelming yourself to justify no action. Move your arse!

**KEEP IT SIMPLE SUMMARY:**

- You don't need to feel brave to be courageous, you only need to feel afraid
- There is no such thing as a big action, everything is merely a series of tiny actions
- Focus on one tiny action at a time to be courageous
- Give yourself permission to quit at any point in time, you don't need to commit beyond what you can handle – tomorrow's another day
- Focus on building up tolerance to fear rather than overcoming it
- Go do something right now to test this out!