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Just an Average Joe

Courage is a word that is constantly being redefined in an ever changing world. The meaning of courage today is much different than what it was only a few years ago. Courage's definition can be completely changed in a single day, as it was on September 11, 2001. Some would say that "courage was this" or "courage was that," but what is courage? Today courage can be redefined by the non-newsworthy events that everyday people go through on a daily basis.

Take for example Joe, an unemployed GM engineer of 15 years. He lost his job to someone in India when his American based company decided to outsource his position. But cool headed, hardworking Joe does not let this get to him. Everyday, Joe goes job hunting for any kind of work he can find. He knows that if he can find a job, he will only make half of what he did, and have to work twice as hard to keep his job. Although his credentials are nothing special, Joe is courageous when he goes job hunting. He patiently waits in a crowded waiting room with hundreds of others who are all vying for the same position. He walks tall into every interview, with a happy and sincere smile on his face as he gives a firm handshake. Even with this attitude, Joe is yet to find work.

Joe also realizes that with every passing day his unemployment benefits are getting closer and closer to expiring. Without these benefits, Joe and his family will not survive. Joe is courageous when he invites his employed friends over, and even they look at him like a bum who does not work. They see him as not wanting to work, just being another one who sponges off of their hard earned check each month. Although no words are ever exchanged about this, Joe can feel the tension, and takes it like a man. This is courage.

Joe is courageous when he tells his wife that everything will be all right as she cries herself to sleep one night, when even Joe realizes there's a fine chance that everything is not all right. He hears his young children sleeping as a tear runs down his soft cheek. It takes all the courage in the world to wake up the next morning, and go through the same routine he has for many months now. Quite frankly, Joe is the very definition of courage. Courage is Joe walking through the streets with his head held high, telling himself that everything will be all right, knowing that all will most likely not be all right. Courage is not taking the easy way out and taking his troubles like a man.

Joe is courageous as he stands in the unemployment line, with no less than a dozen other "Joes." Joe is an icon of courage. He walks courageously wherever he goes, and works hard on whatever he does. He accepts the fact that he will have to be a blue collar man for a very long while until he can move his way up in the workforce. Joe will take any position at any pay. He will take any shift there is. It doesn't matter if it's first, second, third, or even fourth if he can get it. He constantly keeps his mind on a better life, thinking about the happiness that is only a heartbeat away. Happiness will be the phone call telling him to come in to work on Monday morning, a call he will never forget. Knowing happiness will someday come is what allows Joe to go on in everyday life.

But who is Joe? Joe might be you someday. Although the story of his life is not newsworthy, the events that Joe goes through redefine courage as it is today. There is a bit of Joe in all of us. We may not be the unemployed, the handicapped who can't work, or the person who just can not seem to hold a job; but what if we are someday? If you could not find a job, would your actions redefine courage? Right now it is imperative for the employed to be the gallery who claps in support of all those who are unemployed and are in similar positions like Joe. So stand tall for Joe and his company, just people who are down on their luck and need a helping hand. Every time we help a Joe, we are Joe; we are courage.