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Life, Fear, and Courage

The soft ticking of the clock keeps a steady, rhythmic beat in a silent room. It smells of disinfectant and old coffee and it is stuffy, to the point that the warm air feels like dry cotton on my throat. I look up from my hands - bitten-down nails and clammy- folded nervously in my lap, to face a man with an inquisitive face, a scrunched up forehead, and relaxed posture waiting for me to continue with whatever my thoughts consist of at the moment. He holds a stiff clipboard with a tight grip and occasionally scribbles something down with his Pilot ballpoint pen, tilting his head and clearing his throat every now and then. For precisely forty-five days, one thousand and eighty minutes, and sixty-four thousand eight hundred seconds I have sat in this same seat, facing the same beige wall, talking to the same man: my psychologist. His critiquing eyes evaluating my every move. I have always been told to tell psychologists everything, but in all honesty I despise these visits; moreover, I am intimidated by them.

The many long and tedious visits were for good reason. During my freshman year of high school I was diagnosed with depression and mild athletic- induced bulimia (essentially working out frequently and eating modicum amounts of food). A normal teenage girl, in my eyes, it never occurred to me that my body was slowly diminishing and that being constantly unsatisfied with myself was not normal. I was petrified by failure and a coward to accept this fear. I was invalid in my thinking that I never failed, for I have; I failed to possess courage.

I use to think that courage calls for actions equivalent to saving a life in the military, becoming a hero, standing up in the presence of danger, and using strength beyond average human capability. But I was wrong. Slowly my eyes were opened, I saw courage all around me. It came in the form a good friend just being herself in front of all her peers, being true to who she was, or someone prevailing over her emotions and facing the world each day after suffering the loss of a beloved father; keeping her family together as best as she could. Furthermore, courage is someone who finally accepts faults and failures and learns to live an invaluable life again. This is how I perceive courage in the world today.

Courage can be the ability to prevail over fears that restrain a person in life. A courageous person is one who can vanquish these fears. I have always been ambivalent as to if I possessed courage. All around me people are courageous in their everyday actions, but I never evinced the courage to even be honest with myself. That changed though. Through my many dreadfully effective appointments I learned to overcome my obstacles and fears. My greatest fear was failure and not living up to the high standards I set for myself. I needed to waive the fear of not being the perfect image that my mind

created. Once I gained the confidence in myself my depression became infinitesimal, the weight was lifted from my shoulders; happiness returned. I was back in control of my life and courage was my catharsis.

Courage, an emotion, action, or thought that coaxes humans to accomplish prodigious tasks and inspires individuals to do actions or feel emotions they normally might not experience. If we all were sitting together still on that couch, still facing that beige wall, still talking to the same man, we would all be cowards. We would be renouncing our lives and falling ill to our fears. Courage is present in everyday life. Courage could be something small like a young child holding in his tears after he skinned his knee or something difficult to come to terms with, like an elderly man in the face of death, preparing to leave his beloved wife and family behind. Fear is the only emotion humans fear; we pull away in the face of it and succumb to its capability of holding us down. Without fear, however, humans would not know the value in living a full life; we stand up to our fears in the name of fulfilling our goals and dreams with the courage within us.