



Photograph by Michael Nichols



LEADING WITH COURAGE

Have you explored your worst fears? My teacher used to say face your fears – “what if your worst fears came true?” Unsettling and scary as it may seem, we have all faced fearful situations – from the material to the emotional. The death of a loved one, loss in business, natural calamity, a bad diagnosis, loss of a job when you need it most are some examples. Human nature is to avoid fearful experiences and stay with the known and comfortable zone.

Leaders are in the eye of the storm. Markets and economies are changing fast and speed of decision making or not making has huge consequences. The solidarity in the leadership team and empowerment to fail fast are learn and move on are great boosters for courage in leaders. In the absence of which, often leaders get caught in the fear cycle of doubting their decision and spend a lot of time going back and forth and even end up missing the opportunity. The trap of seeking more data, digging into the safety of past precedence, seeking multiple opinions and trying to make the decision as safe as possible may not be the right approach. Rather than going with data alone, trusting your gut or intuition could be the better formula which balances the data with wisdom and common sense and makes the decision sounder. To gain the right insights and intuition, courage is a necessary ingredient. Fear only takes you to stay in the known, low-risk zone which could marginalise the business and team you lead.

Another common trap in fear is that there is only one best solution or one best possibility. In reality, there may be more than one great thing waiting to happen. These pathbreaking solutions and possibilities come to you only in relaxed and harmonious environments, not in places of nervousness and anxiety. Great things cannot happen in a toxic culture of blame games and politics. The leaders own the context and environment in the workplace and having a healthy and fertile soil for courageous decisions is yours to build. Calculated risks and brilliant breakthroughs then become the norm and you build winning teams.

Leading with courage at the core is about nourishing your own physical and mental wellness. Nurture harmony and calmness in every aspect of life and from that place you can access great success in whatever you chose to do and operate from a place of confidence rather than fear. Being in the company of happy people whose positive magnetism rubs off could be another big booster. When you are a role model for courageous decision making and for extending support when others fail, you sow the seeds of success.

Three questions to ask yourself:

- What are my worst fears?
- What is one step I can take to be more confident about my worst fear?
- How can I prepare myself to have a courageous conversation I have been avoiding for a while?

When you lead with courage, calmness and confidence, your leadership is just so much more beautiful!