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BLOGPOST: Monthly motivation: Unfuck it all!



What does it mean to have courage? Why do we sometimes need to face our fears for our courage to grow? Philosopher Jörg Bernardy argues in this issue of the "[Monthly Motivation](#)" that our current times are in desperate need of courageous people and that the notion of courage is more complex than one might think.

Why we need a new culture of courage

I don't know where or how you spent your summer holidays, but it's highly likely that the weather conditions were somewhat different than usual. Record temperatures in California and Canada, forest fires in numerous countries, droughts and water shortages as well as record rainfall – according to climate experts, whose assessments leave little room for doubt, extreme weather of this sort will be more normal in the future.

Overall, the balance of the past few weeks seems rather sobering: a disastrous flood in the Eifel, a devastating hurricane in Louisiana and an oil spill off Cyprus, plus a surprisingly swift victory for the Taliban in Afghanistan and a Bundestag election campaign that has thus far been without a single highlight worth mentioning.

More courage to decide and act

'2021 is the year of decisions,' says the Zukunftsreport ('report on the future') 2021 of the Zukunftsinstitut. 'Everything is at stake now: rebellion, democracy, globalisation, corporate responsibility – and freedom.' If anything is becoming more apparent in these uncertain and confusing times, it is the notion that the way in which Western societies do business, live, travel and consume can no longer be sustained over the next ten years.

Whoever wins the election on 26 September will have to summon up real courage in order not to make do with an unimaginative 'carry on as before!' More courage! Isn't this just another slogan rapidly gaining popularity as the new catchphrase in politics and economics, both of which are increasingly faced with the limits of their growth? The courage to change, to be free, to take responsibility, to create openings or take risks, the courage to speak truth and one's opinion.

Courage is multifaceted

Yet no one really knows what courage actually is. Courage is always individual and context-based. On the one hand, it is a virtue, a skill that can be acquired – like soldiers or arachnophobes can learn not to let their emotions get the better of them.

On the other hand, courage can also occur spontaneously. There are sudden outbursts of courage when we have extreme experiences, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. A good example of this category is civil courage. In any case we associate courage with a higher goal that should be noble or meaningful. We all know heroic stories of this type.

The courage to be angry, or the art of not giving a damn

Then there are the quiet and sometimes also loud outbursts of courage in our everyday lives, when we do something good for ourselves or someone else. When we transcend boundaries, try out new things, overcome our powerlessness and dare to open up and reach out to others; when we confront our fears of losing status, of failing and of making mistakes.

Just as there are many different facets to the phenomenon of 'courage', there are many paths that lead to an outburst of courage. One essential ingredient for all is the fact that we have to face our own vulnerability, fears and anger in order to become courageous. A simple "unfuck it all!" can do wonders, as it liberates us from the burden of futility and frees the way for a new manifestation of courage – in the full knowledge that we aren't going to save the world.

Face your fears and be rewarded with change

'I would have liked to know at 16 that the only thing that stands between us and life is our own fear,' the writer Cornelia Funke once told ZEIT magazine. 'And that you shouldn't feed it by giving in to it. I would have liked to know that there can be no change without paying for it with fear, and how liberating it is to do things you are afraid of.'

Incidentally, after almost 16 years in the US, Funke will be leaving her avocado farm in Malibu and move to Tuscany later this year. She lists climate change and the constant threat of forest fires in the region as the two most important reasons for her move.

If we become aware of our own fears and vulnerabilities, we can develop the courage to act. Or to put it in Silicon Valley parlance: weaknesses, fears and failures are part of the solution, not the problem.

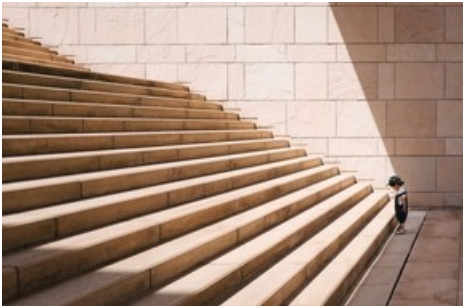
'I've never tried that before, so I think I should definitely be able to do that!' (Pippi Longstocking)

This article was originally posted in our blog:

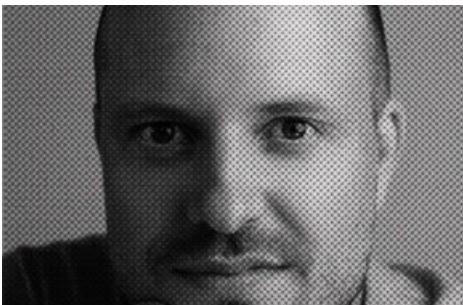
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