

PAYING IT FORWARD

Leading With Purpose

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■ Chief Randy R. Bruegman, (Ret)



After 40 years in the fire service, Chief Randy Bruegman founded The Leadership Crucible Foundation to reshape future leadership with a focus on fostering courage, empathy, and humility in leadership positions.



“Courage Is The First Step To Success”

“A crucial lesson that every leader should embrace is that leadership is not about oneself, but about making a difference in the lives of others. The greatest reward a leader can receive is to positively impact the people they lead, regardless of their profession. So, if you aspire to become a great leader, remember that your focus should always be on serving others and making a positive difference in their lives.”



Courage Is The First Step To Success

As a veteran with 40 years of experience in the fire and emergency services, I have witnessed firsthand some remarkable displays of courage by our first responders. The act of entering a burning building to rescue people trapped inside, repelling down a building to rescue those trapped on broken scaffolding, administering life-saving care to individuals inside a vehicle hanging from a bridge embankment, or police officers who put themselves between a shooter and their potential victims, are examples of true acts of courage.

However, one may ask where this courage comes from. While some people may exhibit more courage than others, it is also a result of preparation. It is not uncommon for these same individuals to return to their day-to-day duties and be fearful and hesitant about having crucial conversations with one of their employees or stepping

out of their comfort zone to take on a new challenge. It is interesting to consider why an individual willing to put themselves in dangerous circumstances may feel uncomfortable in these situations.

In her article “Courage as a Skill,” Kathleen Reardon highlights that business courage involves a special kind of calculated risk-taking. Successful leaders possess an above-average willingness to take bold moves, but what sets them apart is their ability to increase their chances of success through careful deliberation and preparation.

What is particularly noteworthy about Reardon’s perspective is that courage is not necessarily an innate trait but a skill that can be developed through repeated interactions, learning, and stepping outside of one’s comfort zone. That is true no matter what level you are at in an organization. As with any

skill, achievement is determined by the goals we set, the level of commitment we display towards growth, and our willingness to learn from our mistakes and persevere through the failure that we will experience.

Courage is a key attribute and character trait that can significantly impact various aspects of our lives. It often serves as a driving force that separates those who succeed from those who do not.

It is also about taking the first steps to do it. I can share that the first time I entered a burning building or repelled off the roof of a structure, I experienced a considerable degree of fear. However, it became easier as I honed my skill set, underwent more training, and gained more experience. What may have appeared to others as courage was, in fact, a result of my previous experiences, skill-building, and preparation.

Developing courage is a crucial character trait one needs to develop if you want to maximize both your personal and professional success. To do so, one must develop valuable skills such as resilience, determination, problem-solving, and self-confidence. You must be willing to embrace challenges, viewing them as opportunities for growth and development. This requires the development of a growth mindset that enables you to see challenges not as barriers but as learning opportunities and stepping stones toward personal improvement.

Taking calculated risks and seeking opportunities for growth beyond what you believe are your current capabilities are two of the best ways to develop that growth mindset in yourself.

The best way is to do something I have never done before or learn a new skill. You never grow inside of your comfort zone, and when you broaden your knowledge and acquire new skills, you may find yourself pursuing a new career path, taking that next promotional test, or interviewing for a new position that you previously thought was out of reach.

When you begin to engage in innovative and creative thinking and challenge your self-imposed limitations, you may find that your own paradigms shift and your framework on what you believe you can do changes. When an individual undergoes a paradigm shift, it can often lead him or her to a change in priorities, which often takes them down a new and different path in life, one that is more fulfilling for you both personally and professionally.

Developing courage can be an incredibly empowering experience that leads to significant personal and professional growth. It all starts with being honest with yourself and having that inner dialogue about what is holding you back. Once you have identified your fears or apprehensions, it's time to confront them head-on. This process can be challenging, but it can also open up new doors and opportunities that you may have thought were once out of reach.

Courage is key to stepping out of your comfort zone and exploring new possibilities. When you have the courage to confront your fears and take risks, you may discover new opportunities and possibilities you never thought possible. It's amazing how much you can unlock when you push yourself beyond your limits and explore new horizons. Without courage, these possibilities and opportunities would remain unknown and unattainable, which is why courage is an essential trait for personal and professional growth.



Here are some ways that can help you develop your courage:

1. Embrace challenges: Challenges are opportunities for growth and development, and by stepping outside of your comfort zone and confronting your fears, you can build your confidence and resilience. Embracing challenges, rather than avoiding them, is the first step toward developing courage.

2. Take calculated risks: Calculated risk-taking provides valuable experience in decision-making, strategic planning, and problem-solving. By researching potential outcomes, individuals can make well-informed decisions that lead to growth and success. It requires careful analysis, intuition, and courage, but those who cultivate this ability position themselves for success in today's dynamic business environment.

3. Seek opportunities to grow: It's important to seek opportunities for growth and development. This can include expanding your skills and knowledge beyond what you currently possess. Every new experience helps shape you and makes you more adaptable and re-

silient. It's also important to have intellectual curiosity and a desire to learn, as these drive personal growth. Don't overlook developing your networking skills. They are critical and can help you create a supportive community that you can turn to for advice and mentorship.

4. Be innovative: Foster innovative and creative thinking by challenging your own conventional ideas and, encouraging yourself to explore new ways of thinking and perspectives, and challenging your own existing mental paradigms. By pushing your own boundaries of what you have previously done, you may unlock new possibilities and opportunities that you did not see before.

5. Challenge self-imposed limitations: Challenging your self-imposed limitations is a crucial step toward personal growth and development. By taking risks and stepping into uncharted territory, you may discover new skills, passions, or interests of which you were unaware. Pushing past your

limitations, you may find new skills, a new passion for pursuing, or become more aware of what interests you.

6. Be honest: Always be honest, even when difficult or uncomfortable. Telling the truth holds immense power, reflecting your character and building your reputation and value as a person and a leader. This begins with being honest with yourself.

7. Adaptability is critical: Developing flexibility and adaptability in a constantly changing world takes courage. Many individuals struggle with this issue, and it can have a negative impact on their work performance as well as their personal life. Since change is constant and inevitable, your ability to face the unknown with resilience can mean the difference between success and failure. If you can incorporate these key elements into your life, you can cultivate the resilience and creativity necessary to overcome obstacles and accomplish your goals.

Walt Disney once said, "All our Dreams come true if we have the courage to pursue them." That is so true. Developing courage is an ongoing process in life, but the benefits of doing so are immeasurable. Don't let fear hold you back from achieving what you want to do. If you find yourself in a situation where you are unhappy in your life or work, begin today to start cultivating your courage to address the issue. If you find yourself tired of feeling stuck and unfulfilled in your personal or

professional life, what do you need to do to change that situation? Do you dream of achieving great things, but fear of failing is holding you back? Maybe it is your time to take action and start developing your own courage to begin to address whatever is holding you back.

Courage is crucial for achieving success in life, and developing it can be challenging for most. As an old, Chinese proverb states, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." I believe that

developing courage is an ongoing process, and it starts with taking that first step toward cultivating your courage to unlock your true potential and overcome the obstacles you will face in your journey.

As the American poet E. E. Cummings wrote, "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." So, don't let fear hold you back from achieving greatness. Take that first step today and start to build your courage skill set. Your future self will thank you for it!

Leaders Are Readers

I believe that to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight. To that end, we provide a few suggested titles below for you to consider:

The Art of Possibility

Rosamund Stone Zander, and Benjamin Zander

Do Hard Things: Why We Get Resilience Wrong and the Surprising Science of Real Toughness

Steve Magness

Leading in Tough Times: Overcome Even the Greatest Challenges with Courage and Confidence

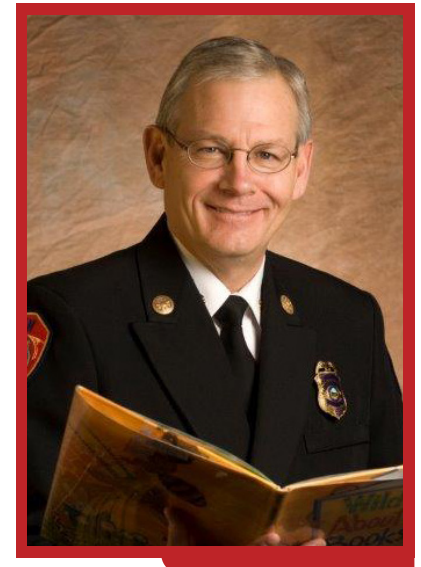
John C. Maxwell

Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life

John McCain

Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway

Susan Jeffers, PhD



Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways



Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in **The Leadership Crucible Podcast**, we take notes on the key leadership takeaways we discussed.

We would like to share some personal and leadership takeaways that we hope you will find constructive and helpful. These insights can be used for personal reflection, or from a professional perspective. You can also share them with your team or colleagues, which can lead to constructive conversations and

positive outcomes. Our aim is to provide valuable insights you can apply to your life and work.

Understanding the concerns and fears of those who are resistant to change is essential for leaders, and so is developing a plan to help them through the journey.

- Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to face it and overcome it.
- Challenging self-imposed limitations allows for personal growth and development.
- Thucydides the Greek historian

once said, “The secret to happiness is freedom... And the secret to freedom is courage.”

- True happiness comes from living life on one's own terms, which requires courage to take risks and pursue your goals despite adversity.
- Inner freedom demands the courage to stand up for what one believes in, even in the face of opposition.
- Cultivating courage is essential for both happiness and freedom, and it is vital for a fulfilling life.