

What is Courage?

“Courage is not the lack of fear. It is acting in spite of it”
Mark Twain

Courage is often a tough quality to master. When we are young, we have the courage that goes with ignorance. As we grow older and have experience some pain or rejection with certain events, our fortitude softens. But if we take out the emotion and look at it logically, the pain should teach us and not stifle us. If we are a little bit smarter next time, great. But if the pain turns into fear and immobilizes us to make the sales call or start a new venture, then it’s a problem.

Fear is like fire. It can work for us or burn us. Often times, just taking a few initial steps is all we need.

One time I had a little girl starting class (6 years old) that was clinging on to her parents and afraid to come into the class. She was terrified! No big deal. I asked her “if she could just put one foot on the ground (she did reluctantly). Then do her other foot. Then I asked her “to take just one step towards the mat (same). Could she take another step a little closer to the mat? She did. Then I asked “can you step on the mat (you don’t have to do the class, just step on the mat)? She did and then ran into the line with the other students. It was amazing, and she was fine after that.

I did two things here:

1. I had her take gradual steps toward her goal.
2. I distracted her from her fear with simple tasks. Her focus became doing the task. Is this something we could do in our own lives?

In teaching self-Defense, we tell the defender to just focus on a target. In practice, we yell out “eyes-eyes -eyes” or throat-throat-throat.” This takes their focus off the situation and targets their mind to a lethal response.

Your past has shown that you already have courage. By being in Martial Arts you have shown the courage to improve yourself. Always inventory the victories of the past. Go forward with confidence.