

Courage, Entry #1 of 3

There are times when we must find the courage to be the lone voice on an issue or stand up for principle against a strong majority (*Guiding Principles, Tradition Two, opening essay*).

Tradition Two reassures us that, as individual members, we don't need to have all the answers. But sometimes, we do have an answer to an issue that comes up in our group, and we're sure it's the right one. It airtightly adheres to our primary purpose of carrying the message. It's well-thought-out. It's aligned with our Traditions. It's absolutely the right answer...though no one else seems to view the issue the way we do. The group's conscience seems to be veering away from logic, principles, and the spirit of NA. So, do we go with the flow or make waves?

When we were using, many of us lived the old standby "go along to get along." Even though we may not have agreed with what was being said or done by those around us, we lacked the courage to stand up for ourselves, our beliefs, or other people. Working a program helps to reveal what our convictions are and how they're aligned with NA's. In a group situation where going with the flow might be the easier choice, we, first of all, check our motives honestly to make sure we're driven by our common welfare and not our ego. We ask our Higher Power to help us find our voice, shaky as it might be in the face of a strong majority. Courage is the strength to stand up for what we believe in.

Courage helps us beat back self-doubt and fears of disappointing or angering others. It keeps us engaged, even open-minded, when our "right" answer is, in the end, sidelined by the majority. Humility can steady us, no matter which way it goes. And, once we find the courage, we can continue to be emboldened to keep using our voice and standing up for principles, while inviting in a Higher Power to influence our group decisions and staying out of the result.

I ask for the strength to practice courage to change the things I can. I know what I believe in and will have the courage to stand up for it—and the willingness and humility to accept the outcome.

Courage, Entry #2 of 3

We find the courage to follow our heart, to listen to the voice within, to create, to commit, to explore, and to live (*Living Clean*, Chapter 3, “Creative Action of the Spirit”).

It takes courage to give this NA way of life a real try. Whether it’s for the first or the fourteenth time, walking through the doors to our first meeting—or first meeting back—takes real determination. And that’s just the beginning. Once we stop using, and our obsession fades, the challenges of living life on life’s terms will call on us to be courageous again and again.

Lucky for us, the NA way comes with access to some valuable, gumption-sustaining resources. We forge lasting friendships, learn from our fellow travelers, and find in them enough courage to transcend the challenges of each day. NA literature can be a source of strength and courage, too. We each find our own understanding between the lines and in the tough questions we ask ourselves. As we contemplate and apply the collective wisdom found in NA literature, we are emboldened to be more fully ourselves, drawing strength from our Higher Power.

With a firm foundation in recovery, we can move through the world with courage and confidence, though sometimes we decline opportunities to do so. “My ‘fear goggles’ kept my focus on the potential for failure or rejection. I was afraid to start or end relationships, to express my feelings, to come out. I was unwilling to be fully myself and paid a price for my lack of courage. In my effort to avoid pain, I’d also sidestepped chances to find real joy.” That’s no way to live.

The example of others and our faith in a Higher Power inspires us to live courageously, despite a lack of certainty. Life is a risky business, and things won’t always work out in our favor. “I’m not God’s little muffin,” as one addict put it. “Things don’t always go as planned. Still, I walk with courage, knowing that you folks will pick me up if I stumble.” We dare to dream—to try and fail and try again.

If I don’t risk anything, I risk everything. I will muster the courage necessary to take a leap of faith today, big or small.

Courage, Entry #3 of 3

It takes courage and humility to open new doors and to close old ones (*Living Clean*, Chapter 4, "Courage").

If we imagine life to be like a hallway full of open doors, each leading down new paths of opportunity, then active addiction basically consists of walking down the hallway, kicking doors closed. Getting clean in NA and working the program allows us to explore new opportunities or revisit old possibilities we had closed off to ourselves in our addiction. Courage and humility make it possible.

The freedom to choose our own path can be scary. After all, if we make a choice for ourselves, we don't get to blame others if we're unhappy with the results! Each time we choose a new door to walk through—or a door to close behind us—we build courage to keep doing so. Actively making choices helps us to see that our higher power will be present in the process, even when the initial results aren't what we wanted. Perhaps we walk away from a relationship, home group, or job that we found unfulfilling, and then we find ourselves feeling lonely or lost afterward. We find a new partner, new group, new job—or maybe we go back to what we'd left—and our feelings change again. It's all temporary, and we always have more chances and choices coming our way.

Some of us change relationships, jobs, and home groups the way others change socks and undies, but if we don't get comfortable with ourselves, none of these external factors can keep us comfortable for long. Courage helps us walk through doors. Humility will help us embrace—or endure—what we find on the other side. Humility means knowing ourselves, faults and all. To be happy with our choices, we need to be honest with ourselves about who we are and what we need and want. The NA program helps us find the courage to make our own choices and the humility we need to live with the choices we make.

The Steps help me find the courage and humility I need to choose my own path. I will put my freedom to good use by living the Steps.