

Courage 2

10 Tips to Live a More Courageous Life

Dear friend,

A basic idea:

Life is all courage.

Life is having the courage of taking risks. Life is about taking responsibility for your own life. Life is about having the courage (heart) to pursue your personal passions in life.

Life is about recognizing your own self-worth. It means recognize that you were born to do epic shit, and you are above pettiness and smallness.

What does it means to have courage?

To me, this is what courage is:

You have the ability to take a certain action, and you take the option you truly believe in (even though it may be more dangerous, and can possibly hurt you).

To have courage means to put your neck on the line for your personal ideals, belief, and art. To have courage means to take personal risks -- it ain't about just commentating, or giving your "opinion". **If you don't have skin in the game (Nassim Taleb), you are not entitled to an opinion.**

Street photography is 99% courage

This is why I love street photography:

It is one of the most practical ways we can be more courageous in our everyday lives.

To me, to shoot a street photograph of a stranger (with or without permission) is 99% courage. It is courage because there are real-world consequences attached.

For example, let's say you take a photograph of a stranger -- there is a chance that they might get agitated, angry, or perhaps even violent (physical or mental). Yet-- this is exactly what makes street photography enjoyable (the risk involved). When I was a child, I was a bit of an adrenaline junkie-- perhaps the psychology of street photographers are the same.

The high of street photography

To me, when I take a street photograph which I find extremely interesting or risky - I get a huge endorphin-rush/high.

Street photography can be addictive, because it gives you a massive high. The high from the excitement of engaging with strangers, by taking risks, and also by meeting new peoples.

Where does courage come from?

Courage means heart ('cor' means heart in Latin).

Thus, **we all have courage. Because we all have hearts.**

What often happens in life is that we get 'dis-couraged'. Which means we *LOSE* our heart.

We lose our heart when others beat us down. We lose our heart when others tell us that we are wrong, or that we are "evil" or "sinning".

Thus this is my practical idea:

*The goal isn't to **add** courage -- the goal is to SUBTRACT people or things which **DIS-COURAGE** you.*

Who are the dis-couragers in your life?

Who are the personal discouragers in your life? For example:

1. Who are the nay-sayers in your life?
2. Who criticizes you?
3. Who disparages your ideas, dreams, or ideals?
4. Who dis-respects you?
5. Who poisons you with negativity?

To gain more courage, you must ruthlessly prune individuals from your life who discourage you.

Your heart is one of the most precious things in your body. Why would you let anyone subtract or weaken any of your heart?

Follow your heart

Your life is short. Why waste or squander any of your precious life-force on petty bullshit? On petty people?

I say:

Follow your heart, passion, and enthusiasms in life.

I study a lot of great philosophers, artists, and individuals in the past. None of them can take their money with them after they die. What do they leave behind? Their actions, their art-works, their writing, and their ideas.

Thus,

In life, don't get distracted by money. Rather, focus on creating powerful and impactful things that will benefit you and the rest of humanity.

Photographers are artists

I'm currently re-studying the work of Richard Avedon (dead) and I am amazed:

His photographs are so alive-- and drip with soul, and excite my heart and inspires me to create my own artwork!

Avedon dedicated his whole life to his art-form (photography). Even towards the end of his life, he was prolific. He shot a lot, and constantly pushed his artistry to next levels-- while keeping it super super simple (with his simple monochrome palette, his simple white backdrops). As the philosopher Stendhal said (something like):

Only the high-minded have the ability to use simple methods.

Keep your equipment and approach super simple.

That means as a photographer-- keep your equipment, tools, and techniques super-simple. Don't strive for "better" gear, strive for "simpler" gear.

1. Simplify your photo-making process (simpler settings)

Don't strive for more fancy methods of taking pictures. **Strive to simplify your photo-making process. Use the simplest technical settings possible.** For me, that means just shooting in automatic mode, intelligent auto mode (iA mode on Panasonic-Lumix), or Program mode on most other cameras.

2. Keep your lenses and equipment simple (one camera, one lens)

Keep your lens simple. Stick to a simple focal length which works for you-- whether a 24mm, 28mm, 35mm, etc. I will always prefer prime lenses over zoom lenses, because **prime lenses are simpler than zoom lenses. Fewer options = more innovative photography-approaches.**

For the most part, I still recommend the simplicity of one camera, one lens. Preferably an integrated (non-interchangeable lens), for example the RICOH GR II.

3. Keep your compositions simple

No need to make fancy compositions. Simplify your compositions, and focus on capturing the souls of your subjects.

No need for extraneous fancy layers for the sake of it. Seek the optimal simplicity. Single subjects.

Takeaway points

My apologies, as always-- getting off-topic.

To distill:

1. To improve your photography, strive to take more difficult, scary, or challenging photos. This means, take more risks in your photography. **When you have the option, take the photos which require more courage.**
2. In life, take more personal risks. Have 'skin in the game', and don't make comments or give your opinion if you don't have any skin involved.
3. In life, it ain't about "success" or "failure". It is about **living a courageous life, following your own personal vision in life, with no compromise.**
4. Ruthlessly subtract people who dis-courage you in life (this includes nay-sayers, people who try to control you, negative people, etc)
5. Allow yourself to be foolish, or a bit ridiculous. All true innovators are seen as 'crazy' by others. Pride yourself on being a misfit-- and don't seek approval from anyone else but yourself.
6. Rise yourself above pettiness. **Every time you complain about a petty issue, you subtract your life-force and your will-power.**

7. Do deadlifts: Men, women, and dogs should all deadlift. When you deadlift, you will get this insane berserker-manic mindset. 90% of deadlifting is mental. This will help you build mental toughness. Go for the powerlifting style "one rep max" style.
8. Listen to music which empowers you: For me, this is generally hip-hop rap music, or some intense EDM music. Gessefelstein (electronic music), Dr. Dre, Kanye West, JAY Z, Kendrick Lamar, etc are good.
9. Watch more superhero movies: Superheroes are good ideals. It helps us aspire to greatness. I like Batman and King Leonidas from the movie 300.
10. Meditate on the shortness of life: The only certainty in life is that you will die. Thus knowing that you will die-- what do you have to lose when pursuing your personal passions in life?

BE BOLD. ERIC