

WELCOME TO QUIET COURAGE – May 2006

The online newsletter for navigating life's changes and transitions from Bailey Coaching and Mary Ann Bailey, MC.

FEATURE ARTICLE:

Sometimes It Does Take a Village

One of the most common roadblocks to successfully achieving our goals is thinking that we must make the journey alone, when in reality the more people you have in your corner supporting and cheering you on, the more likely it will be that you will be successful in reaching your goals.

Having a strong and reliable system of support is an extremely important piece of any change process. Who will you call when you are feeling stuck, discouraged, or want to quit? Who will you celebrate with when you are successful?

Who will be there to prod you, encourage you, and remind you how great you are and that what you are doing is wonderful and courageous? And who will you turn to when you need information, resources, or a new way of thinking about something?

Developing this kind of safety net allows you to share the burden of your change with others, and therefore lightens your load. It also helps ensure success, as a team effort is usually more successful than a single person going it alone. But it can be easy to resist putting a support system into place.

It might be uncomfortable for you to appear vulnerable and ask for help. It can also be a little scary to publicize your dreams. When you ask someone to help you achieve your goals, they then know what you are planning to do. What if you fall short? What if you fall flat on our face? What will they think?

There is always a slight chance that the people in your support network may have some judgments about what you do or don't do. But it has been my experience that we actually are our own worst critic; and having a group of people behind us who truly believe in us and what we are doing is a great way to alleviate many of our imagined fears and concerns.

So, how do you create a support network that will be most beneficial to you? This is a good question. It is important to choose your supporters carefully and to realize that

not everyone has the ability to truly be supportive of change in others. When you decide to make a change in your life, you actually cause small ripples of change in the lives of all those around you.

The effects may be as direct as not being as available to your friends as you once were; or they may be more subtle such as a shift in your values or philosophy of life. These shifts can be threatening. Your friends begin hearing nagging little voices saying things such as, "Am I really happy in my job?" or "I really would like to change jobs too, but I'm not sure I have the nerve."

As these kinds of thoughts and fears begin to creep into their minds, they may find it difficult to be as supportive as they could be. They get stuck on the question, "If Peter actually succeeds at this, what does that mean about me?"

So, it is often necessary to go outside your usual group of friends and family to find the support you need. One of the best ways to start creating your own personal network of support is to make a list of all the areas in which you would like help and then ask yourself who or where can I find support for that area.

The following exercise will provide a structure for you to begin this process.

EXERCISE: Creating a Village of Support

1. Make a list of all the areas in which you would like support as you work through the change you want to make in your life. The areas could include emotional support, accountability, help with information and resources, being sounding board or devil's advocate, help with creative thinking, etc.
2. Then for each area ask yourself, "Who would be the best person to help me with this area? If a name comes up, write it by the area, if not leave it blank.
3. Once you have gone through the list once, then go back and look at the areas that have no names by them. Ask yourself, "Who do I know who might know someone who could help me with this", or "Where might I look to find help with this area?"
4. Now that you have your list, the next step is to get very clear in your mind about what you are asking each of them to do, how specifically you want them to help you, and how you might sabotage the process.
5. When you are clear about what you want of your team members, meet with each of them and ask them if they will be willing to help you with this process. Having established guidelines and expectations will make it much easier for you to ask for help and for them to respond.

Also, taking the time to talk to them before you start the process will show them that you respect their skills and abilities and that you are very serious about this change.

As you go through this exercise, pay attention to how you feel and what thoughts come up for you. Asking for help can be difficult for many reasons and it's important to become aware of where you could run into trouble.

You might be someone who believes that asking for help is a sign of weakness. Maybe you are someone who believes that you are bothering people when you ask for help. Or maybe you are someone who holds the belief that you don't deserve anyone's help.

Examine whatever beliefs kick up for you. Do you really believe what you are telling yourself? If someone came to you and asked for your help, would you think them to be weak or bothersome? Probably not, so see if you can give yourself the same compassion that you show your friends.

Making a life change is a multi-faceted process and it only makes sense to use the power of teamwork to help facilitate this change. Give yourself permission to draw on the resources, talents, knowledge and support of other people. This will allow you to spend less time reinventing the wheel and more time working on achieving your new life goals.

Until next time, all the best,
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