

Powerful Courageousness: Practices to Expand Yourself & Your Gift

Imagine a woman who has a powerful gift to give to the world, a song to sing that will lift others up ... but she only lets herself give that gift when the sun is shining and she's happy and the moon is in perfect alignment with Jupiter.

The world would be robbed of her song. Her narrow range of when she's willing to offer her gift would be a devastating loss to those she serves.

Imagine a man who serves everyone around him deeply, so powerfully that they are all filled with their own sense of purpose. But he only does this when he is in the right mood, when he's not distracted by online articles, when he's not tired or lonely, when he's not criticized by those around him and when his house and office are perfectly clean.

Those he fills with a sense of their own purpose would be less filled. Those he gives his love to would be deprived, because he has such a narrow range of when he's willing to push himself to offer his gift to others.

This is how most of us live our lives. Shrinking from the challenge of focusing on our purpose-filled work, because we're tired or sad or anxious or stressed, because we're allowing ourselves to be distracted and pulled in thousands of directions.

This is our failing, and it's our opportunity for growth.

When you are "not feeling it," and are procrastinating on focusing on your purpose ... this is a time to notice how you feel, notice that you're shrinking away because you aren't in the perfect mood ... and then expand yourself.

You expand by:

- Opening up your heart in the middle of pain or stress, and allowing yourself to fully feel. Don't shrink away, but find the courage to be incredibly present with whatever you're feeling.
- Feeling love for your experience, for whatever is causing you stress or pain, and not rejecting it. Seeing it as your teacher, your *beautiful practice ground*.
- Reminding yourself of the gift you *need* to offer the world. Reminding yourself of your purpose. Bringing your open heart to that work.
- Pushing yourself into the discomfort of focusing on that purpose, even if you are feeling sad or hurt or frustrated or distracted. Pushing yourself into the discomfort of saying no to all the distractions and busywork, and just doing what you need to do to offer your gift.

This is your challenge, in every moment. Expand your range by not needing conditions to be perfect. Not needing everything to be in order. Not needing to have all your messages responded to, all your inboxes and social media checked, all your articles read, all your crumbs swept up, before you dive into your purpose.

Expand your range by not allowing yourself to shrink. It's like putting yourself in arctic conditions, in desert conditions, and practicing your art despite the unhappiness.

In fact, you *use the unhappiness and chaos to offer your gift*. You take that stress and pain, and you turn it into love. That brilliance is a part of your gift.

Let's look at some specific practices for expanding your range of conditions so that you are no longer robbing the world of what you have to offer.

Practices to Expand Yourself

Once a day (to start with), create a space for practicing. Set yourself some purpose-filled work to do. Then try these practices:

1. Notice what you're feeling. Are you tired, stressed, frustrated, angry, sad, lonely, distracted, hurt, anxious? Then fully feel it. Forget about everything else in the world and just be fully present with whatever you're feeling. Not the narrative in your head about what you're feeling, but the actual physical feeling in your chest, stomach, head.
2. Open your heart to that feeling. Love it. Don't reject it, wish it would go away, try to get rid of it. Just freakin' love it. And love its cause: the work stressing you out, the person who criticized you, the unhappy situation in your life. Love it as if it were the most beautiful thing on Earth. Which it is.
3. Open your heart in the middle of this discomfort, and then take the first step in doing your work. Do the first small action, the tiniest movement, in the middle of these arctic conditions. See it as training for your heart. Courage training. Hold your heart open as you do it, keeping in mind who you're serving.
4. Love even fiercer as you do the next small step. Don't let your people down. Imagine that you would die for them, do anything to serve them, and that you hold them powerfully in your heart.

Repeat these practices every day. See your range grow. See your gift grow out into the world, unhindered by life's impediments. Sing your song powerfully and courageously, lifting up every soul around you. Then bow in gratitude to your practice.