

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Facing What Frightens Us Most

Courage is embracing fear and seeing it for what it is ... and what it is *not*. It takes courage to identify and release the illusion of fear's power over us. It is this courage that moves us forward in a determined way toward freedom, love, and joy.

It takes courage to look at our lives, our relationships, our marriages, and what we fear that keeps us supporting unhealthy and often destructive behaviors instead of choosing healthy, supportive ones. People often say, "I do not want to hurt him [or her]." The reality is that most of us knowingly stay in horrible situations rather than risk change that would better our lives because we fear separation from someone or something we value. Keeping the status quo, no matter how bad it is, can often be a control mechanism. It takes real courage to let go of our fear of change—which we initially see as loss—and to embrace change as being supported by the Spirit that dwells in and around us.

Our hearts are eternally grateful for our many opportunities to meet people in diverse cultures who have demonstrated enormous courage when faced with frighteningly fearful life challenges.

Diane Barnes, M.D., is one of those people. As a third-generation physician practicing at Kaiser Permanente San Rafael Medical Center in the San Francisco Bay area, she had a very busy life. She was juggling a full-time career in diagnostic radiology with being a single mother to two very active boys when she suddenly suffered a debilitating stroke.

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Shortly afterward, Diane came to our Center for Attitudinal Healing. The stroke caused aphasia (a condition that makes communication difficult because it interferes with using language), so when she was finally able to speak again, what came out of her mouth was an incomprehensible jumble she describes as a "word salad." No one had a clue what she meant when she spoke because she made no sense. This caused her to experience



a lot of stress in everyday life, especially when her 12- and 14-year-old boys could not understand her needs or frustrations.

In time, however, she began to do improvisation as part of her therapy. How much courage do you think it takes to stand up in front of others without a script and discuss just about anything? And to do this with stroke-traumatized speech and movement? More than we can even imagine. She so enjoyed the improvisation work and found it so helpful in her recovery that during her years of extended healing, she took classes in performance and acting to improve this ability.

Eventually, she created a one-woman play called *My Stroke of Luck* that she has performed around the country. After sold-out performances in Los Angeles and Off Broadway in New York City, and then performing at the Atlanta Black Theater Festival, she did a run in San Francisco. We attended one of the performances, which we found to be an amazing experience. We witnessed someone who not only can speak normally now but who is also sharing her own healing journey to help others.

It takes tremendous courage not to give up and give in to despair. It takes monumental courage for a shy, private person to perform alone on stage and to expose her deepest vulnerability. This is the very definition of courage—facing head-on what frightens us most and having strength in the face of fear. 🌟



**GERALD JAMPOLSKY, M.D., AND
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ARE THE FOUNDERS OF ATTITUDINAL
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SEPARATELY, THEY'VE AUTHORED 16 BOOKS.
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