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# the MOMENT IS NOW

NEWS FROM THE CENTER FOR COURAGEOUS LIVING



## Working with Courage

In my early years of meditation training I was unable to sit still for long, maybe five minutes, before I would shift my body with hopes of improving my practice. My body hurt, my mind was impossible, and I was crawling out of my skin much of the time. My practice revealed glimpses of "calm abiding" and "dignity," but it was tough going!

My teachers reminded me that practice was a breeding ground for courage. Courage, I was told, becomes the seedbed for nurturing our deepest aspiration for a meaningful life and for a sane society. It takes courage to be present to the unknown, to touch what is frightening, to let go of what is familiar, and, once again, open. Now I remember to bring my heart to the cushion ~ how else will I cultivate bravery?

## MEETING YOUR EDGE

When we bring greater mindfulness to the edges we meet in daily life there is much to learn from the current limitations we feel to being present with our physical, psychological and emotional pain. Meeting these edges and the accompanying fear with kindness, allows us to expand beyond limitations, cultivating greater resiliency and tenacity in the face of difficulty. I love the following story from Pema Chodron's book, *The Wisdom of No Escape*, because it reminds us to go beyond "comparing mind" in order to understand the deeply personal (nonetheless ordinary) facets of living *our* full catastrophe.



*There is a story about a group of people climbing to the top of a mountain. It turns out it's pretty steep, and as soon as they get up to a certain height, a couple of people look down and see how far it is, and they completely freeze; they had come up against their edge and they couldn't go beyond it. The fear was so great that they couldn't move. Other people tripped on ahead, laughing and talking, but as the climb got steeper and more scary, more people began to get scared and freeze. All the way up this mountain there were places where people met their edge and just froze and couldn't go any farther. The people who made it to the top looked out and were very happy to have made it to the top.*

*The moral of the story is that it really doesn't make any difference where you meet your edge; just meeting it is the point. Life is a whole journey of meeting your edge again and again. That's where you're challenged; that's where, if you're a person who wants to live, you start to ask yourself questions like, "Now, why am I so scared? What is it that I don't want to see? Why can't I go any further than this?" The people who got to the top were not the heroes of the day. It's just that they weren't afraid of heights; they are going to meet their edge somewhere else. The ones who froze at the bottom were not the losers. They simply stopped first and so their lesson came earlier than the others. However, sooner or later everybody meets his or her edge.*

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