



"Know Fear", an excerpt from "The Call to Authenticity"

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"...I get so afraid when I think about what my gifts are and what kind of an impact I might have on others. What if I fail?" asked Louis. "When I look at other leaders whom I respect, they seem so confident in themselves. I can't compare."

"I recall once hearing a story of a woman who was trapped in a sky scraper," replied Henry. "The floor underneath her was on fire. The leader of the group realized they were going to have to run down the stairs through the flames to survive. The woman who was telling the story panicked and screamed, 'We're all going to die!' At that point, another woman went up to her and grabbed her on both sides of her face. She looked into her eyes and shouted, 'Do it scared!' This calmed the woman down enough so that she and all of the others followed the leader to safety. Louis, anyone who has ever undertaken any project that requires all of their being has been afraid. Sometimes we just have to 'do it scared'."

"Try to imagine how Martin Luther King must have felt when confronted by hateful prejudice. He knew he was risking his life to live his dream, but it didn't stop him. The wonderful thing about fear is that when you face it and work through it, you transform yourself into a powerful vehicle to help others. You become an authentic leader."

"So leaders aren't self-confident?" asked Louis.

"They become self-confident," said Henry. "No one is really confident the first time they try something challenging, but once they face their fears and allow their passions to dictate their behaviors they become self-confident. Success is inevitable. Self confidence is nothing more than the belief that you can do whatever is necessary to achieve your objectives. Facing fears is how you achieve self-confidence. In fact, I believe that a hallmark of a leader is that he/she rarely panic when he/she is afraid."

"That's amazing," said Louis. "I always just assumed that confident people were never afraid."

"I don't think so," replied Henry. "The way I see it, courage is what defines a leader. Without fear there is no courage. Fear is the fire that galvanizes the will of leaders. Think about it, many who became great leaders, did so because of, not in spite of, extremely challenging circumstances. For Churchill it was World War Two, for Lincoln it was the Civil War, for Ghandi it was British oppression, and so on."

"So, it appears that I actually should welcome fear as a necessary part of the process of leading. Is that right?" asked Louis.

"Precisely," said Henry. "Your fear will help get you focused so that you can tackle obstacles enroute to your goal. Learn to embrace, not avoid fear. Don't let it immobilize you. Realize that fear is an important component of success. It helps you become more focused and alert. Your fear will also show you the roadblocks to achieving your goals. I like to think of life as an oven. Fear is like the heat in that oven. It's as if you are made of clay. If you are courageous when you face the heat, you gain wisdom and you turn into something spectacular, like porcelain. If you run from the heat it will burn you up and you will turn to dust. Many teenagers today have stickers on their cars that say 'No Fear'. I say *know fear*."