

Start small. Starting small means starting with the actions that induce less fear and require less courage to accomplish. So, send a friend request on Facebook to that boy you like, or have a small conversation with the person behind the register before moving on to asking someone out, or discussing politics with that person who's on the opposite end of the political spectrum.

Know your limits. There are certain things that we just cannot do be it pick up that spider, come out to our homophobic boss, or go skydiving. That's okay. Sometimes these are fears or limitations that can be worked up to and sometimes they aren't. Focus on building your courage for other things, like coming out to your parents instead, putting a glass over the spider so someone else can take care of it, actually getting into a plane.

3

Build confidence. Having confidence allows you to trust in your abilities and yourself, and realize that you are more than your fears. When you have confidence in yourself you will find it easier to take courageous action. Learning to have confidence takes practice.

Faking it until you make it. You can trick your mind into confidence by pretending to yourself that you are confident. This means tell yourself you can ask that girl you like on a date and, whatever she says, it has no impact on your self worth.

Don't let your failures or limitations dictate who you are. Failure simply means that you are trying and is something to learn from, not to avoid. Make sure to remind yourself that your failures are not you.

Remember to have faith in yourself. A true sign of courage is trusting yourself and having the confidence that you have something to offer. Tell yourself that you have something to offer, even when you don't think you do, you will trick yourself into thinking so. Remember arrogance and confidence are different. Someone who is truly confident can listen to others and handle criticism with grace, because they know the criticism is not directed at their person, but at their actions or words (criticism that is directed at your self worth as a person should be ignored).

Part 1 of 2: Having Courage in the Moment

1

Don't fight your fear. Being courageous means doing something despite the fear. Fear comes from the body's natural response to the brain's fight or flight response. It sends cortisol, a stress inducing hormone, throughout the body's nervous system, making the body go into hyper-drive. Fearfulness is a learned behavior, based in our brain chemistry, but strengthened by the world around us that has trained us to be fearful. Learning to work through fear and step beyond it is about retraining your mind.

Avoiding fears actually makes them stronger and scarier. There's a certain mindset in Western culture that views emotions as weakness and seeks to suppress them. But suppressing negative emotions only heightens the fear of the negative emotion itself, strengthening them the more they are avoided.

Exposing yourself to things that you fear (obviously be safe) can help the brain become desensitized to the fear and make it easier for you to face, based on the brain's neuroelasticity.

Don't hesitate. The longer your brain has to come up with excuses for putting it off and to panic about the outcome. If you have to pick up a spider, jump out of an airplane, or ask someone on a date, do it without hesitation.

Reinforce your successes by giving yourself a reward when you do deal with your fear. This could be a physical treat, or a break from human interaction. If you make that difficult phone call, treat yourself to time with a book

2

Build your courage for specific scenarios. It takes different kinds of courage to ask out someone you are interested in, to speak to your boss about a raise, or confront someone who is being a bully. One thing all of these scenarios will require is to act as if you're confident, whatever you actually feel. Confidence and courage comes through acting as if you are unafraid, even (and especially) when you are.

When you ask someone out, the best way is to be direct with them, but that can be scary. Practice what you're going to say ahead of time. If you can, talk to them away from their friends so it will be easier on you and them. Remember, if they say no that isn't a reflection on you, or your desirability. Be respectful of their decision and be proud of yourself!

Speaking to your boss can be difficult, especially if it's about problems you're having at work, or perhaps asking for a pay raise. Ask to speak to them privately and plan out what you're going to say ahead of time. It's okay to feel nervous, don't fight it. Make sure to breathe normally and speak with conviction.