

## Dare to Have the Courage of Your Talent

By: Pat Lynch, Ph.D., President

*“You must have the courage of your talent.”*

With that statement, Alan Weiss opened his 2011 Thought Leadership symposium. It was meant to provoke the audience and stimulate some serious soul-searching. It did both.

Talents are innate abilities, gifts that people are born with, such as athletic prowess, an aptitude for singing or playing a musical instrument, a flair for the dramatic, the power to bring out the best in others, the ability to inspire people to take action. Unlike skills, which can be learned, no amount of practice can *create* talent. However, talents can be honed with practice.

If asked to name talented people, we might think of individuals such as Michael Jordan (athlete), Itzhak Perlman (musician), Meryl Streep (actress), or Mother Theresa (humanitarian). But don't let those well-known names fool or intimidate you: everyone has talents. However, not everyone uses their talents. Here are five reasons why not:

1. They truly don't recognize their gifts.
2. They're afraid of failure.
3. They don't think their talents are “good enough.”
4. They think they're too old to start something new. (It's a good thing artist Grandma Moses didn't think that way: she started painting in her 70s.)
5. They think their talents are no big deal.

Specious rationales like these are obstacles that prevent people from sharing their gifts with the world. To get beyond these barriers often

requires courage – to take risks, to move into the unknown, to claim ownership of one's true talents.

*Having the courage of your talent* means that in spite of your fears, your self-doubt, and what others may have said to discourage you, you fully embrace the gifts you have been given. It means that even though the thought of sharing and living your dreams may be scary because they are so far removed from who you are, or who others think you are, or what you are doing right now, you step into the opportunity that your talents present. It means that you take the risk that others will find something wrong with your efforts – because some will. Yet you persevere because there are many more people who will see the value that you provide. And you fuel your courage with the knowledge, deep down, that you are not living your life fully unless you take the leap of faith needed to get past all the “What if...?” questions that have held you back. *Having the courage of your talent* means taking a deep breath and unleashing the power that comes from fully embracing your innate gifts. Perhaps in doing so you will discover a facet of yourself that you may not have acknowledged before – yet somehow you know has been there all along.

Life is short. Dare to have the courage of *your* talent beginning today.

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