

What it Takes

An essay from Lauren's forthcoming book, Restoring Your Immunity

"Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue constantly.

~ Maya Angelou

There was a period of my life I lived out as a fearful, exhausted and overwhelmed woman. You can learn more about her in my post, Developing Purpose. When reflecting on what it took for me to transform to the woman I am today, three qualities come to mind. Those qualities are courage, creativity, and commitment. Of course, I had good teachers and therapies to support this transformation, but without these qualities, the changes I set out to make would not have held.

You too will need to discover those qualities within yourself to be successful in restoring your immunity. There's a big noisy world out there that doesn't exactly encourage the lifestyle you will begin to adopt and you are going to have to get comfortable with that fact is critical. In my work as a family health coach, I have had the honor of observing clients engage with their own courage, creativity, and commitment as they began making changes. Let me share a few of their stories.

Courage

Courage is essential when the lifestyle changes you adopt bump up against the norm of your family, peers, or colleagues. To take those first steps forward requires being completely OK with being THAT person. Because truthfully, it will be you who

needs to pass over Aunt Lou's dairy-laden scalloped potatoes as well as that slice of chocolate cream torte in the window of the Italian bakery on your romantic getaway.

You will more than likely have to be the one at your office lunch meeting who specifically orders their salad without cheese, only to find it coated in parmesan! You may also discover that you no longer embrace those weekly late night outs with the guys or gals on the town with the same zeal as before. In order for you to discover that courage within, you must become comfortable putting yourself and your needs first, accepting that is not selfish, but rather what self-care looks like.

Here's a recent example of courage I saw in my practice. Living in a small town in East Texas, Dee knew finding local company or encouragement on her path to health would be a challenge, but she accepted that she would need to manage alone. It had become clear to her that the way she was taught to feed and care for her body was no longer serving her. She dealt with daily digestive symptoms and interrupted sleep. It was taking a toll on her emotionally, causing spikes of anxiety, and beginning to affect her work performance. Something had to change, and without an ally among her hometown friends or family members, she drew on the courage that she discovered years ago when she took on a career path that was out of her comfort zone. She chose to stop making excuses for the healthy choices she needed to make and accepted she was on the right personal path. As her physical symptoms improved, so did her confidence in what she was capable of. Whether Dee realized it or not, by her staying true to her body and her convictions she actually gave her peers permission to do the same. Being courageous is far from selfish – it actually allows us to serve others by our example.

Creativity

Creativity is what comes into play when we choose a path less traveled. This is particularly true when the path is one that leads to restored health and, ultimately, restored immunity. It will take a creative mind to step back and even consider there may be a different approach than those pursued in the past. Creativity is also needed in a very practical way every day as we navigate a world that doesn't eat like we chose to.

Creativity is needed to solve the following...

How do I still go out to lunch with friends?

How will I manage the string of upcoming holiday parties or family celebrations?

How do I create foods that I'm excited to be eating?

The answers to each of these questions involve stepping outside of the box of how things have been done in the past. Start by locating small shifts that can be made. It takes a creative spirit to be willing to fail miserably and try again until we meet success.

There is no finer example of embodying this kind of creativity than my niece, who is also my client. Raising five children and living with the symptoms of Crohn's takes a creativity all its own. When she decided to turn the tables and embrace a plant-based lifestyle in the middle of Montana, she would need to be highly resourceful.

Determined to change her health story, Molly not only flipped her diet but the diet of her children who at the time were ages 1-10 years. They became breakfast smoothie drinking champs! Molly's creativity is certainly an inspiration for others, just as your creative solutions will inspire those whose lives you touch. Molly's way of eating and feeding her children is challenged on a daily basis by time constraints and also by extended family and peers. Yet Molly has

persevered by enlisting her children in daily meal prep and carving out time on the weekends between soccer matches and 4-H events for batch cooking. What Molly soon realized was that the better she felt physically, the more creative energy she had to explore new ways of feeding herself and her family.

Commitment

Commitment is a quality that must be developed internally and cannot spring from someone else's opinion of a good idea. Commitment to a lifestyle must resonate with your belief system. If you're unsure of your own belief system regarding your health and healing have a look at my post titled An Invitation.

To be committed you must believe in what you are doing. A commitment is strengthened when it aligns with our truth and we begin to appreciate the way we feel. Just take a look at other commitments you've made in your life. Whether it's been to a particular relationship, to raising their children, finishing an advanced degree, or learning a language, you have drawn on your own inner strength to see it through.

Can you draw on the same motivation and apply it now to the pursuit of restored health and immunity? It is commitment that truly holds all of this together. You can have all of the courage and creativity in the world, but without commitment, it's all for naught.

My client Lydia had tried it all, and while she had some success, she still had a few nagging symptoms. She wanted to feel strong and vibrant and knew a "diet" wouldn't deliver the results that lifestyle changes could. Lydia knew the only way to make progress was to stay on track. As a working mom of two young children, Lydia knew all about courage and creativity but now she needed to commit to a new lifestyle. Her desire to be healthy and strong for her family provided the motivation she needed to get started. However, it was the pleasure she

felt as her symptoms began to resolve that kept her committed. The better Lydia felt the deeper her commitment became to the changes she was making.

These are just three short examples of what I see unfold in my practice week after week. Normal people like you, ready to feel better and willing to put to use their own courage, creativity, and commitment.

Reflection

To gain some clarity in where you stand, take a moment to reflect and write your answers to the following three questions:

What obstacles will you face that will require you to be courageous?

What situations will you encounter that would benefit from creative solutions?

What are some examples of successful commitments you've made in the past?

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