

Dare to be a Hero: At Work, At Home, and For Yourself

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What does it mean to be a hero in your life? Everyone has their personal stand for what they believe makes a hero. No matter what our personal definition of “hero” is, we all have the opportunity to be the hero of our own lives. Sometimes it takes a bit of an awakening and sometimes it’s just connecting with and “owning” that hero inside us...Whatever the case, we know when we are being a hero in our own life. Being authentic, fully engaging and truly caring about others is a great start...But often it’s not enough. There is much more to being a hero in your life and it centers on creating more energy, stamina, self-awareness and courage for YOU. This article address what it is to be your own hero and how you can use energy, leadership and daring to call forth an even greater hero in you everyday.

I've had this conversation with many people and find it highly fascinating. I've found that the meaning of "hero" is very personal and unique to each individual. Everyone has their personal stand for what they believe makes a hero and some have varying degrees they've designated of the "hero scale."

For some it's about being fully engaged and nurturing your kids to be powerful confident little human beings who know they are valued and loved. For others it's being able to inspire others to live bigger lives and stretch beyond where they ever would have thought possible. For some it's someone who creates a major WIN for a group of people or a company. For others it's someone who is able to inspire their folks to greatness. And for many it is about doing something brave and courageous in service of another human being, or overcoming an awful disease or event, something that stretches us past what we would have thought we were capable of, but had to do.

There are many heroes in this world. Different kinds of heroes, there are those who risk life and limb on a daily basis to protect us, and those who are heroes in a perhaps less obvious quiet way. I've known of parents, teachers, coaches and mentors who were considered heroes. And then of course there are the heroes who run into burning buildings, take on causes, fight for our safety and well-being and stand for their beliefs. What is a hero to you?

What does being your own hero mean to you?

Whatever your answer, whatever your definition, one thing is consistent, it's the deep knowing of whether or not we are showing up in our lives as our own heroes. It's the deep knowing that we are doing all we can to call out the hero in us and step up to be our best. We know if we are aspiring to be our own heroes and if we are in integrity with those aspirations. We know if we are heroes in the context of our lives...or not. It doesn't mean that we always succeed or do magnificent things, in fact, we probably fail miserably in our attempts sometimes, what's important is that we give it our best shot, we are honest and authentic, we aspire to be our best and we dare to engage to make it happen.

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If the word “hero” does not work for you, I invite you to find YOUR word that calls your forth in your life. It maybe “warrior”, “leader”, “best self” or something else that resonates for you. It really doesn’t matter what word works for you, what matters is the essence and what that word means. What matters is being awake and holding that essence as you go about your daily life. As you look at what the impact is you want to create – at work, at home, for yourself. It’s up to you. It starts with you first aspiring to be your own hero. And bonus, it will help you be an even better hero for others.

Regardless of what kind of work I am hired to do, or the agendas of my clients, holding the essence of being their own hero in their life is something that is essential in our work. So often, the word “hero” may never even be used; it’s more of the energy of it. It is the energy of knowing that *“the buck stops here, if I want something in my life to change or grow, I am the one who gets to step up. I am the one it can start with. Blaming, complaining and abdicating will not get me there; it’s in my power to choose to take action.”*

Through the development of self awareness and discovery, self-initiative, “response-ability”, building relationships, and creating intentional results and impact, that change can happen. It’s not always easy, it’s often very trying and full of wins and “failures”, but holding the essence of being a “hero” in my own life, can supply the fuel to keep leaning back in.

Whether we’re talking about creating changes in the organization; getting a new job, increasing effectiveness with a team, becoming a more conscious leader, or talking about creating changes on a more personal level; the stand is the same. It’s about being the hero in your own hero’s journey and sticking with it when it gets hard, taking in the learning, course correcting when necessary, building relationships and support, and being authentic in your path...All while taking extremely great care of yourself.

I believe there are a couple of things we can do to be better heroes in our own lives. There are many. The most basic, yet important, of them all? Daring to engage. One of the foundational stands of my business is on “daring to engage.” Daring to engage the person, place or thing that you must in order to move forward in your life and create the results you want. Daring to engage you, your energy, your presence, your relationships, your life and your leadership...it’s all in there.

I feel so strongly about it, that I actually rebranded my company “Dare to Engage™” and created a whole model and program around it to support clients in integrating these things and turning up the heat for themselves so they can be that hero. So they can more fully engage. So they can live a life well lived, full of life and energy and joy.

One of the fundamental elements of Dare to Engage™ is the ability to engage and lead your energy. Another is the ability to engage your presence, both physically and mentally. Another is the ability to step out of comfort zones and engage “edges” in service of the bigger vision and the impact you want to create on others.

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- You have to have the energy and stamina to engage again and again in your own hero's journey.
- Being present and awake in this moment brings an automatic peace and awareness that you can not get when filled with rushing and worry. This is where the deeper knowing lives, where powerful action can be decided upon.
- Your physical presence can support or hinder you. What does yours do for you?
- Comfort zones can be expanded and conquered with a compelling enough reason to move out of them. What's yours?

These are some of the elements we look at in our work together. They all have a powerful place and some will be more necessary than others from time to time. I challenge people to take extremely great care of themselves and to look at these things. These are the things we can lead for ourselves, the places we have choice and control over; how we treat our bodies, how we engage in healthy eating, how we lead our energy, how we show up. Combine these areas of engagement and you have a powerhouse foundation for being that hero.

I have a special place in my heart for being a hero at work AND at home. I have kids and a family, and I empathize and experience the same challenges that others do in being that "hero" at work and at home - and finding the "balance"...finding the place of consistent full engagement. I see the power of full engagement and the influence it has on lives (my own included) and the lives of children. And it's important. It's not only important now, but for their futures and how they show up. I see the power of effective leadership and strong relationships and pure authenticity, and I see the power of taking extremely great care of yourself so that you can have the resources and stamina to give it your best effort, over and over again!

We all need a hero sometimes; I believe that when we can be our own heroes first we're better prepared to be heroes to others in a beautifully powerful and sustainable way. You have to dare to engage to do it. You have to dare to engage you, your energy, your presence, your people, your life and your leadership to get there. And when you do this, you can dare to be a hero.

Anese Cavanaugh, CPCC, cWC, HFI, coach, author, speaker and business owner, has worked with people for over 18 years in helping them create greater energy, more effective leadership and improved health and productivity. As the creator of Active Choices, Inc. (2002) and the Sustainable Leadership Program™, she is also the founder of Dare To Engage™, programs devoted to helping leaders become more fully engaged and effective, while practicing extreme self-care, improving their relationships, creating systems that work, and increasing their courage, vitality and personal sustainability. She serves on the faculty of the ISAE Executive Leadership Series and holds several credentials in the areas of health & wellness, leadership development and coaching. She has worked with leaders of all types ranging from stay at home moms/dads to leaders in Fortune 25 organizations, and holds an extra special place in her heart for leaders who juggle parenting and careers. Anese is married and a mother to two special children; Jake and Isabella.