



# Courageous Leadership Step 1: Taking Risks and Stepping into Character

How many times in our lives have we put something off because we're not ready, we need more time, we don't feel comfortable, etc etc. I've completed 10 Ironman Triathlons and over 40 10 day non-stop Eco-Challenge Adventure Races through the most remote places on earth, and here's a secret: I didn't feel 'ready' for any of them.

There was always more I could have done to train, something I needed more time to prepare, or I wished I could delay the start until a day when I felt stronger. Truth be told, I would most likely never have approached a start line or undertaken those "risks" to journey into the unknown physically, emotionally, interpersonally if there wasn't a specific race date on the calendar and someone with a megaphone saying "go!". But I am ever so glad I did. I wouldn't give back those moments, memories, and lessons for anything on earth. Because it is in those moments of risk, where we are forced to rise to a challenge, that we add another brick to the foundation of our character, confidence and strength. So how do we stop "wishing" we had the COURAGE and inspire ourselves to take risks and go big? Step 1...Step into Character...

## Step Into Character-

Here's a very important thing to remind yourself...Nobody knows all of the insecurities and worries that going on inside of your head but you. Remember that to the outside world you appear 100% to be the successful business person, world class triathlete, mom/dad of the year, super star litigator, (enter your dream here). When you have those moments of self doubt, here's something fun to do: Try to see yourself the way your colleagues and closest friends see you--confident, smart, talented—and BE that person. Step into character. It doesn't even matter if you're faking it, because you become what you believe.

For example, I'm the biggest introvert on earth, and one of my other full time/part time jobs in addition to being a firefighter is being a speaker. Ninety times a year I'm on a stage inspiring leaders for major corporations to Build World Class Teams. And every single time while I'm pacing behind the scenes, with my heart beating out of my chest, I wonder if I'm going to have the courage to walk out onto that stage.

But then I tap into something that my friend and team manager told me at one of my first presentations. I was asked to speak at a conference called Real Time, organized by Fast Company Magazine, because my adventure racing team had been the focus of a feature story in their magazine called Extreme Teamwork. One of the images they used for the article was a sweaty, sandy shot of my teammate and I looking rather heroic and happy after an intense beach bootcamp class. Right before I went on stage in front of a room full of 200 business leaders, I was so nervous that I thought I was going to pass out.

The room was spinning, I had forgotten everything I was going to say, and I feared that everyone in the room was going to be able to see what an amateur I was. And then my friend, sensing my panic, came over to me, put her hand on my shoulder and said "Everyone out there came to see the beautiful, badass woman in that article who is going to make them even better leaders. You don't have to feel like her--you just have to BE her when you walk out there.



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Give them the Superhero they came to see." And then it clicked. I WANTED more than anything to be the Supergirl that they were counting on to entertain and enlighten them that morning. I envisioned the smart, strong, fun world class adventure athlete whose unique leadership wisdom would be more than worth the hour of time these important business leaders willingly gave to me. And the moment I walked on stage, I magically became her.

I stepped into character. And that marked the real beginning of my life as a speaker. In my audience that day was a Zone Vice President for Starbucks, and I suddenly found myself on a 10 city tour speaking to Starbucks Store Managers. I guess my alter-ego, Supergirl, was a hit. Eighteen years and 1,000+ keynotes later, I still get nervous, I still have doubts, I still fear that I'm going to forget my most salient and important points, and my heart rate is still 120 just standing in the wings before I go on. That's par for the course when one seeks a moment of peak performance.

Especially when hundreds, if not thousands of people are watching. But when the production crew plays the video that introduces me, I envision the smart, strong, fun Supergirl that everyone is expecting to see (vs scared little me) and the moment they say my name and invite me onto stage, I become her. So....Who is YOUR awesome badass alter ego? Create one and watch the magic happen. You don't have to feel strong, smart or amazing enough in the moment, because your own Supergirl/Superguy is. And they are your best (and forever) teammate.

XO, Robyn



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