



Courageous Leadership Step 4: Back Up But Never GIVE Up!

You do what you can for as long as you can, and when you finally can't, you do the next best thing. You back up but never give up---Chuck Yeager

Sometimes it's the setbacks in life that inspire an even better way forward. Courage means not only "enduring" those setbacks but taking yourself and the people around you to a new level in the FACE of those challenges. In other words, when life throws you a curve ball, why just duck or step aside when you can hit it out of the park instead?!

I was always inspired by the Chuck Yeager quote "you do what you can for as long as you can...and when you finally can't, you do the next best thing...you back up, but never give up"... but never more so than in 2007 when I had a pretty big setback of my own. In the middle of the 2007 World Adventure Racing Championship in Scotland, I was suddenly unable to move my right leg and I fell to the ground. I got up but could not move my leg forward under its own power, so for the last three days of the race, I had to literally move my leg forward with my hand or pull it forward with a rope. My teammates put me on tow lines, took my pack, and we finished in a disappointing 6th place when we had come to win.

When I arrived home, I went to an orthopedic surgeon and discovered I had stage 4 osteoarthritis in both of my hips. No more cartilage. I was in complete shock and didn't want to believe it, but that marked the beginning of what would be 6 hip replacements in 8 years (because my first four replacements failed for multiple reasons. Blah blah blah). But luckily, with the right attitude and focus (which wasn't instant, mind you! I had to grow the positivity as I went!), hip replacements did not mark an end to my adventurous life, it just sparked a change of sports and a new beginning.

After my first hip replacement, I knew I would get my spirit back by doing what my good friend, Louise Cooper had done while she was going through her chemo and radiation for Breast Cancer, that is, use the down time to plan new adventures! But then it occurred to me that other women who have "Survived" setbacks far worse than mine might really benefit from getting outside and inspiring and amazing themselves through adventurous and athletic goals too.

Which sparked my "Back up but Never Give Up" dream-- the Project Athena Foundation. For the last 9 years, I and my team of CIOs --Chief Inspiration Officers and Trail Angels have taken Cancer Survivors and survivors of other medical or traumatic setbacks on some incredible adventures, surrounded by a cohesive and supportive team. Our new "Athenas" have completed adventurous dreams like crossing the Grand Canyon twice (in two days), running a marathon on the Great Wall of China, finishing their first triathlons, learning to surf in Costa Rica, entering their first rock climbing event, hiking to the top of the highest peak in their town and cycling and kayaking all 120 miles from Key Largo to Key West.

And we were SO thrilled and honored to become one of the 2014 CNN Heroes! At Project Athena, the understanding is that we're not out there to get back to what we were...we're all out there being the very best of who we are TODAY. It's truly all about backing up but never ever ever giving up. So what is YOUR back up but never give up?



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How can you take life's curve balls and hit them out of the park? Maybe in a way that not only helps you become better but also in a way that gives something back to your family, friends, and community? Remember, it's not about the setback, it's about the comeback!

Robyn

XO, Robyn

P.S--Speaking of missions, I have one for you! At the 501c3 Project Athena Foundation, we not only take Survivors on our endurance adventures, we also take Fundraising Gods and Goddesses (yes, both women AND men). So if you want to train for and come along with me and our awesome Survivors/Athenas on a cool adventure for a great cause, like our annual Grand Canyon Rim to Rim treks, our 24 hour Mini Adventure Race in Santa Barbara, or our "Keys to Recovery" 3 day cycling and kayaking adventure from Key Largo to Key West, we'd love to have you come out and play! For more information and to apply to be a God, Goddess or Athena, go to www.projectathena.org. See you out there!



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