

chapter 4

Courage: Conquer Your Fears

“COURAGE IS RESISTANCE TO FEAR,
MASTERY OF FEAR, NOT ABSENCE OF
FEAR.” — LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

We usually think of courage as the kind of bravery that leads to heroic acts. But courage is also what enables dreamers to face and conquer their fear of the unknown. It's scary to set off on an uncertain course, to leave the familiar behind, or to be the first to try something new. By accessing the Dream CPR essential element *courage*, you can conquer the fears that are keeping you from realizing your dreams.

College professor Marigold Linton, champion cyclist Lance Armstrong, and business owner Stephanie Ngo Pham all relied on their courage to reach their dreams. Marigold grew up in poverty on an American Indian reservation during the 1940s and 1950s — a time when the dreams of Native American girls were neither valued nor supported by most of society. An outstanding student, she dreamed of going to college and earning a degree. But nobody living on her reservation had gone to college, and Marigold was afraid that people were right when they told her

that she would fail. Marigold had to summon courage to face her fears, leave the only home she'd ever known, and become a trailblazer.

Ever since he was a child athlete competing against bigger and older opponents, champion cyclist Lance Armstrong has been facing and conquering his fears. But his biggest test came when, at age 25, he was diagnosed with cancer. Would he ever race again? Would he even survive? Lance faced these terrifying unknowns and not only survived, but came back to claim victory at the brutal Tour de France a record five times.

A Vietnamese refugee, Stephanie arrived in New York City with no money, no English skills, and two young children to care for. Confronted by homeless men begging for money at the airport as she arrived in her new country, Stephanie feared for her family's future: *How will I, a foreigner, be able to feed my children when these Americans have to beg to survive?* she wondered. But Stephanie faced her fears head-on, working hard to learn English and acquire a cosmetology license so that she could get a job at a nail salon. Just three years later, she opened her own nail salon; today, she's the proprietor of 25.

These three dream achievers reached their goals by finding the courage to overcome their fears and pursue their dreams. Their personal stories show how the Dream CPR essential element *courage* enables us to face challenges rather than run from them. Courage is about finding the strength within ourselves to move forward with our plans, despite our fear of the unknown.

MARIGOLD LINTON: BLAZING NEW TRAILS

Every time she turned around, Marigold heard someone predict that she was going to flunk out of college. It didn't matter to the naysayers that the American-Indian teenager was earning top marks in high school. A frightened Marigold had to call on courage to overcome her fears and pursue a college education. In the end, Marigold not only earned a bachelor's degree, she went on to become a college professor and renowned researcher who has helped secure educational opportunities for others growing up on

American Indian reservations. Marigold shows that courage can free our dreams from the stranglehold of prejudice.

The visit from her teacher caught the eighth-grader by surprise. Mrs. Adams came onto the reservation, marched straight to Marigold Linton's mother, and said: "Your daughter is very bright. You have to make sure she goes to college." Marigold had never heard these words before. At school she was always known as "the smart little Indian girl." But until that moment, nobody had ever mentioned the possibility of college; on the contrary, the message she had received time and again was that "Indian kids don't go to college."

People from the outside rarely came onto the Morongo Indian Reservation in Southern California where Marigold had lived since the day she was born. Life on the reservation was hard: Marigold's family of five lived in a tiny, two-room adobe house that they often shared with several relatives. There was no electricity or running water, and the family combed nearby fields for firewood on the weekends. Marigold and her brothers left the reservation every weekday to attend school, but none of the non-reservation kids or teachers ever ventured in. Except Mrs. Adams. Her visit was a sign to Marigold, who immediately began to save her pennies for college tuition. From that day forth, she dreamed of going to college.

Not that she knew what it was, exactly. When Marigold tried to picture college, what came to her mind was an official-looking building she had seen in nearby Riverside that was actually a citrus experiment station. What took place inside college was a complete mystery to Marigold. Her parents didn't have a formal education. Marigold's mother taught her how to play tennis and chess but did not know how to prepare her daughter for higher education other than to offer encouragement. No one on the reservation had gone to college. Marigold tried to get information from her friends at school, but got nowhere. She recalls, "I kept asking people what college was, you know, the great conversation opener: 'Say, what is college?' Typically I was told, 'Oh, you know what college is.' Period." Marigold needed courage to march forward and chart this unknown territory.

The excellent student was also a talented athlete; Marigold won the county tennis championships two years in a row. With her top grades, Marigold tied for valedictorian of her high school class, but prejudiced school officials arbitrarily moved her to second place. "I thought it was unfair," she says, "but being stoic, I did nothing about it. That was just the way things were. But I had begun to think that some day, people will realize how remarkable my performance is." Her high school achievements did gain Marigold acceptance for admission at the University of California in Riverside.

The summer after she graduated from high school, Marigold got a job at a shirt factory. Her employers were so pleased with her work that they wanted her to stay on permanently. "They told me: 'You're not going to make it through college, so why bother,'" she recalls. "They tried to entice me with pay. They said I would do very well for myself at the factory, earning more than what 90 percent of the people in my reservation were making." They weren't the only ones trying to change Marigold's mind. In school and on the reservation, people kept predicting that she wouldn't make it through the first semester. Even her own beloved father told her: "When you flunk out of school, you can come back. We will always be here."

Marigold worried that the naysayers might be right. She was afraid to leave her reservation, afraid of the mysteries of college life. But she didn't want to give up her dream. And so with just \$900 in savings and a small scholarship, she enrolled at UC Riverside in the fall of 1954. "I told myself that I had to live an entire school year on this," she recalls. "I budgeted carefully and never spent more than \$100 a month." She was the only American Indian on campus. (Many years later, a colleague discovered through research that Marigold had been the first California reservation Indian to have left the reservation to attend a university.)

In the beginning, the world of college was foreign and confusing to Marigold. "Everything was traumatic," she recalls. "First I couldn't figure out how to catch the bus and then, wanting to remain as unobtrusive as possible, I couldn't bring myself to pull the cord to get off. On campus, I was afraid to make a fool of my-

self so I never talked. When I was called on in class I would start crying and run out of the room. Fortunately, in comparison with other freshmen I wrote brilliantly so my professors graded me very high.”

Frightened of flunking, Marigold spent almost every waking moment of her first semester studying. When she saw her report card, she thought there had to be a mistake. How could she have earned straight A's? Marigold recalls: “I literally went to the registrar and said, ‘You have made a mistake and you must give these grades back to the person who earned them and give me my grades.’ They thought I was crazy. It took a very long time before I believed that I might be successful.”



But the next term, it was the same — she earned all A's. Marigold finally began to relax a little as it slowly sank in that the naysayers had been wrong. She started to go out and date, and obtained part-time jobs and bigger scholarships. And she kept studying diligently, continuing to get top grades while learning the ways of a world where she felt she didn't fit in.

She majored in experimental psychology, and after fulfilling her original dream of earning a college degree, Marigold kept going. Fascinated with her chosen field, Marigold completed graduate work at the University of Iowa and then earned a Ph.D. at UCLA. Marigold went on to have an illustrious academic career as a cognitive psychologist, making great research strides in the area of long-term memory and co-authoring *The Practical Statistician: Simplified Handbook of Statistics*, a bestseller. She has taught as a tenured full professor at both San Diego State University and the University of Utah. But achieving this tremendous success in her academic career did not dim Marigold's memories of her struggles as a college student. And so, Marigold began to dream of creating greater educational opportunities for other American Indians.

This dream led Marigold, at age 50, to accept a position with Arizona State University as the director of American Indian Programs. Among her many accomplishments, she secured grants from the National Science Foundation and NASA to bring quality math and science education programs to American Indians living on reservations in Arizona.

“People have different needs at different times,” she points out. “Within the American-Indian community, those who want to leave the reservations should. Those who want to stay on the reservations should. But all need to be given the opportunity to develop skills.”

Marigold co-founded the National Indian Education Association and has served on the board of the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science. Today she is the director of American Indian Outreach at the University of Kansas at Lawrence, where she has secured \$10.5 million in grants to fund programs, such as one that gives students at neighboring Haskell Indian Nations University science research opportunities working in laboratories with KU scientists. “This position is very fulfilling to me,” she says. “I have just arranged special bioinformatics classes for Indian students, which will place them at the cutting edge of science — rather than years or decades behind.”

Courage has helped Marigold not only reach her own dreams but encourage a new generation of American Indians to do the same. She recalls the moment she finally understood what college was: “It wasn’t until I was getting out of graduate school that I had my epiphany: *College was someplace where you learned and explored.* Had someone ever said that to me? People can only hear what they are ready to understand.”

Marigold’s inspiring example shows that making a plan and sticking to it can help you develop courage and overcome your fears. Even before she knew what college was, Marigold began to plan and save money for it. And even before she realized she could succeed, she planned for success. “Plan early,” she advises. “I have plans for every year of my life until I’m 95! Chart a course and follow it: You have to imagine your future.”

LANCE ARMSTRONG: A TOUR DE FORCE

In the summer of 2003, he amazed fans and competitors by winning his fifth Tour de France in a row. But it was something Lance Armstrong said to reporters after winning his fourth Tour in 2002 that put it all into perspective: “Regardless of one victory, two victories, four victories, there’s never been a victory by a cancer survivor. That’s a fact that hopefully I’ll be remembered for.” It takes tremendous courage to compete in one of the most physically and mentally demanding cycling races in the world. But it takes greater courage to face and fight cancer.

At 25, Lance Armstrong was on top of the world. He’d twice won the 12-day Tour DuPont race in the United States and was the first American to win the grueling Fleche-Wallonne race in Belgium. Ranked as the number one cyclist in the world, Lance was a two-time Olympian who dreamed of winning the ultimate test in cycling endurance — the Tour de France. The “Golden Boy of American Cycling” had just signed a two-year, \$2.5 million contract with French racing team Cofidis. Illness was the last thing on his mind.

Everything changed on October 2, 1996, when a urologist delivered the shocking diagnosis of testicular cancer.

Within 24 hours, Lance underwent surgery to remove the malignant testicle. Chemotherapy began four days later to fight the cancer that had already spread to his abdomen and lungs. Then, doctors made another devastating discovery: The cancer had spread to his brain.

Often throughout his budding career, the young athlete had called on courage to race against formidable opponents. Now Lance needed courage to fight the battle of his life. His first concern was: *Will I ever race again?* Then, the severity of the situation hit him. Doctors were giving Lance only a 50/50 chance of survival. Some of them privately thought his chances were closer to 20 percent. The real question was: *Will I live?*

In the midst of his fears, Lance found courage by reminding himself what he was made of. He was an endurance athlete, somebody trained to push himself to the limit. He was a fighter. Even as a fifth-grader, Lance had been a serious competitor when he took up running and swimming. He discovered that he was a natural at long-distance running but found swimming to be a challenge. Although he was 11, he was put in a class with seven-year-olds to learn basic strokes. He was embarrassed but didn't quit. His mother always said to turn every obstacle into an opportunity, so young Lance swallowed his pride and stuck with swimming. A year later, he placed fourth in the state in the 1,500-meter freestyle.

At 13, Lance combined his swimming, running, and cycling abilities and entered the Iron Kids Triathlon. He wasn't the biggest or the strongest competitor, but he won. By age 16, Lance was a professional triathlete, and he was gaining particular attention for his cycling abilities. As a high school senior, Lance accepted an invitation from the U.S. Cycling Federation to train with the junior national cycling team. He was thrilled to represent the United States in Moscow at the 1990 Junior World Championships. His high school's administrators, however, did not share his enthusiasm: Because his intensive training caused Lance to miss six weeks of school, they threatened to keep him from graduating. Furious, he and his mother found a private school that accepted Lance and enabled him to graduate on time.

After competing as an amateur cyclist in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Lance turned professional. But at his first pro cycling race, the 1992 Clásica San Sebastián in Spain, his performance was so disappointing that he seriously considered quitting his sport. The last of 111 racers to cross the finish line, he felt the sting of humiliation as spectators laughed and mocked. It took tremendous courage for Lance to get back on his bike and face crowds again. He did, placing second at the Championships of Zurich that year. Despite his shaky debut into professional cycling, Lance came back to win the World Championships in 1993, took second at the prestigious Tour DuPont in 1994 and went on to win that race in both 1995 and 1996. And in the summer of

1996, Lance represented the United States at the Olympic Games in Atlanta.

But even Olympic athletes can get cancer, and as he faced brain surgery in late October 1996, Lance was frightened. Lying awake the night before his operation, he thought about life and death, fear and hope, what he had done in life and what he had left to do. He was comforted by the thought that cycling had given him so much already. If something went wrong during surgery and this was the end of the road, well, it had been a great run. Yet at only 25, he had just begun to live. There was so much more he wanted to experience: Things to do, places to see, people to meet, races to win. Lance did what he always did best — he fought his fears by clutching tightly to his dreams.



The following day, the delicate six-hour surgery went smoothly. Doctors, family, and friends — and of course Lance himself — were greatly relieved when he opened his eyes and spoke. The next morning, he was back on chemotherapy. Throughout the weeks of treatment that followed, Lance endured severe nausea and pain. But with courage he found strength in the knowledge that the toxic medicines were ridding his body of cancer. And he mustered the courage to get up on his bike between chemo cycles and ride, even if only for a few blocks, to keep alive his dream of competing again.

When his treatments were finished that December, his prognosis was good. Lance was thankful to be alive, thankful to his mom, his friends, and every doctor and nurse who had helped him get through the greatest battle of his life. Barely into remission, he wanted to do something for other cancer patients. He founded the international, nonprofit Lance Armstrong Foundation to raise money for cancer research, promote cancer awareness, and help cancer survivors. Helping others was cathartic for Lance.

By the spring of 1997, Lance was training in full force again. To the delight of his fans, he returned to professional cycling in 1998. He had lost the lucrative Cofidis contract, but had gained a new sponsor, the United States Postal Service, which continues to sponsor Lance and his cycling team.

After Lance was diagnosed with cancer, no one would have been surprised if he had retired from competition. But having faced death and beating the cancer that had invaded his body, Lance reclaimed the dream that cancer had nearly extinguished. He wanted to win the Tour de France, cycling's ultimate test of endurance, strength, and speed.

In January 1999, Lance began to train for the Tour, which would take place the following summer. He practiced the course diligently, riding up to seven hours a day with his teammates across the rain-drenched Alps and Pyrenees. By the time the three-week race started in July, Lance was prepared. But he needed courage to face the crowds. Lance knew what people were thinking: *He almost died from cancer. What's he doing here?* He wanted neither sympathy nor skepticism. Lance was there to win.

At the end of the Tour's first day, Lance was wearing the coveted yellow jersey that sets the leader apart. As we all know, Lance went on to shock the world by winning the race. To date, he's won it every year since, surpassing American Greg LeMond's three consecutive titles and tying Spain's Miguel Indurain, the only other rider who's won the Tour five times in a row.

Watching him race today, it's hard to believe that Lance ever had cancer and underwent brain surgery, or that he was ever hairless, weak, and drained from chemotherapy. Now a proud father of three, Lance smiles easily these days. He's got a lot to live for. Courage saw him through cancer, the most harrowing ride of his life. As for the Tour de France victories, well, those are just icing on the cake.

STEPHANIE NGO PHAM: STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

The life of a refugee can be frightening and confusing, as “Stephanie” Ngo Pham knows firsthand. When she came to America from war-torn Vietnam, she didn’t know how she would provide for her children. She couldn’t speak a word of English and had no money or marketable skills. But Stephanie courageously faced her fears head-on to build a successful business and create a new life that’s many times better than the one she was forced to flee.

Sometimes our circumstances shape our dreams. Growing up in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, “Stephanie” Ngo Pham dreamed of a life of freedom and peace for herself and her family. In 1979, she got her chance. Cradling her three-month-old son in her arm and holding her two-year-old daughter by her side, the 21-year-old felt both excited and scared as she, her husband, and her mother-in-law arrived in New York City. They had left everything behind, bringing only a few items of clothing and the priceless documents that granted them entry into the United States. There was no direction to go except forward: Just as she had needed courage to escape the land of her birth, Stephanie would have to rely on her courage to start over in America.

As the newly arrived refugees made their way through the airport, Stephanie tripped and broke the strap on one of her thong sandals — her only pair of shoes. Unable to keep her balance with a broken strap, she removed her sandals, stuffed them into her bag, and continued barefoot through JFK airport on that cold October day. “As I was walking,” she recalls, “people would look at my bare feet and laugh. They spoke in a language I could not understand. I was so humiliated. My feet were so cold but I managed to keep up with the others.”

Once outside the airport, Stephanie was startled by the coldest wind she had ever felt. With no shoes and no coat, she held her baby close for warmth while the family tried to get to a nearby hotel. Snow began to fall, and Stephanie remembers how men wearing long, heavy coats came up to her with outstretched

hands, begging for money. It was Stephanie's first encounter with America's homeless and she could not believe her eyes. She swelled with panic. "I had no money, not even a dollar," she says. "I was so cold, so thirsty. These men were asking us for money when we were poorer than them. I asked myself, 'Why did I come here? Why did I bring my kids here? How will I make money?'"



With help from American sponsors, Stephanie and her family settled in Virginia where she was reunited with her parents and siblings who had escaped Vietnam months earlier. But winters proved too difficult for Stephanie and the rest of the family. Unable to adapt to a climate so different from the warm tropics they'd always known, the family constantly got sick. The last straw was when Stephanie's father slipped on a patch of ice and injured his head so badly that he had to get stitches. So six months after Stephanie arrived in the United States, the entire extended family bade a tearful farewell to their sponsors and new friends and moved to sunny Southern California.

There Stephanie found the courage to enroll in Pasadena City College. While her parents and a friend looked after her two young children, Stephanie bussed tables at a restaurant to pay her tuition. "It was very difficult for me to learn English," she recalls, but restaurant patrons and coworkers alike helped her learn the language.

Stephanie knew she needed marketable skills and decided to study cosmetology. "I picked cosmetology because I love beauty," she explains. "I wanted to help make people beautiful." After earning her cosmetology license, she landed a job at a beauty salon, working as a nail technician by day while she continued to wait tables at night. Between her two jobs, Stephanie worked as many as 18 hours a day, saving as much money as she could.

That's because Stephanie had already formed a new dream: to run her own business. She could see that the demand for beauty

services in Southern California was high. Working side-by-side with her manager, she watched carefully to see how a salon was run, and she saved diligently to open her own business. In 1982, just three years after immigrating to America, Stephanie had saved enough money to open her own modest 800-square-foot nail salon in the heart of Los Angeles. She took pride in the quality of her work and soon built up a loyal clientele. Many of her customers had trouble with her Vietnamese name, Ngo Hong Soa Thi, which she was using at the time. So she adopted the American name of "Stephanie," which she found pretty, to make it easier for clients to pronounce and remember her name.

From the beginning, Stephanie had the courage to tell her clients that she needed their help in order to succeed. She made an agreement with each customer: She would do her very best, and if they were happy with the results, would they please bring their family and friends to her salon? Her approach worked. "Within only five months, I was shocked to find how quickly my business had grown to become a success," she says. "Every morning before we even opened for business, people were already waiting in a long line to get in." Stephanie soon had to hire eight nail technicians to meet the demand.

With such good business, Stephanie wanted to expand. So she took some of her profits and invested in additional salons, opening them one at a time and sharing her good fortune with her family by hiring her 11 brothers and sisters to manage her shops. Within eight years, Stephanie was the proud proprietor of 15 salons stretching across Southern California and into Arizona. Today she owns 25, including three in Georgia and two in Canada.

Stephanie believes without a doubt that she and her family made the right choice by coming to the United States. "Before every family feast," Stephanie says, "we have a lengthy prayer to thank the good Lord for all he has done, for how he saved us and brought us here to this wonderful life." Among her many blessings is the courage that helped Stephanie get through those frightening first years, which propelled her to create the secure future of her dreams.

Courage to Move Forward With Your Dreams

“YOU NEED TO MAKE A ROADMAP. YOU HAVE TO SET GOALS. PUT THEM DOWN IN WRITING. AND IN YOUR MIND YOU NEED TO SEE IT HAPPENING BEFORE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENS.” — CYNTHIA HESS, PROFESSIONAL PSYCHIC (CHAPTER 5)

Are you afraid of what might happen if you follow your dreams? You're not alone. Marigold Linton was afraid of flunking out of college, but courage helped her pursue her degree. She would have missed an incredible opportunity had she given in to her fears. That's why the Dream CPR element *courage* is so important. Too many people shortchange themselves by giving in to their fears and giving up on their dreams.

Courage is a matter of facing your fears and relying on your inner strength. Courage doesn't necessarily remove the fear, but it does foster the strength to overcome fear's paralyzing grip, freeing you to strive toward your dream.

Here are some ways you can develop your courage:

- 1** Acknowledge your fears. Whatever you are afraid of — failure, success, rejection, abandonment, public speaking — realize that countless other people on the planet have these same fears. Just don't allow these fears to rule you. Instead, set your mind on the goal you want to achieve.
- 2** Picture yourself doing something you'd love to do but have been afraid to try. *What's the worst thing that could possibly happen?* Whatever that awful thing is, it's probably something you can handle. Sometimes our fears take on life of their own. Understanding that an actual worst-case scenario is usually not as bad as we imagined can help us become more courageous. Lance Armstrong was afraid of losing a race and being laughed at. That's exactly what happened to him when he turned pro. Was that the end of the

world for Lance? No. He felt hurt and embarrassed and he considered quitting — but he didn't. He got on his bike, trained hard, and became a champion. Have courage — you can survive most of your worst-case scenarios.

- 3** Once again, picture yourself doing what you'd like to do but have been afraid to attempt. Now ask: *What's the absolute best thing that can happen?* Wouldn't it be great to achieve that? By focusing on that fantastic end result, you'll develop the courage you'll need to get past obstacles.

Like everything else, courage takes practice and gets easier with practice. Where did Lance get the courage to fight and beat cancer? From years of practice. He began developing it as a child when he struggled to learn to swim. Resolve to practice courage regularly. How you practice is up to you, but here are some suggestions to get you started: Pick

up the phone to talk to a difficult relative you've been avoiding. Visit a nursing home to confront a fear of aging. Try karaoke to ease your fear of speaking to an audience.

Let courage work for you and your dreams:

- 1** Have you abandoned a dream because fear stopped you? If you had tapped into courage to follow and reach that dream, how would your life be different today? Would it be better? Don't beat yourself up over lost opportunities; rather, resolve to make the most of your current possibilities.
- 2** Make a list of the times that you reached a goal by calling on your courage to overcome fear. Didn't it feel great to achieve your goal?

Consider how you've stood at both ends of the spectrum: Fear has stopped you from reaching some goals, and courage has



Dream CPR Journal

Continue to breathe life into your dreams by making a list of your favorite jobs or volunteer activities.

What did you enjoy most about each one? Be specific.

given you strength to reach others. Tap into your courage to gain control over your fears, until your ability to reach your dream becomes much more powerful than the fears that try to hold you back. Courage works in your favor.

It takes courage to dream. In some ways, we're all like Stephanie — starting over in a strange country, afraid of what we might encounter. Courage enables us to brave the uncertainties we meet as we traverse the path to our dreams. Courage helps us face challenges head-on and determine what our next step will be.

Confidence repels doubt and discouragement while courage breeds strength to overcome fear. Next you'll see how commitment enables a dreamer to go the distance.