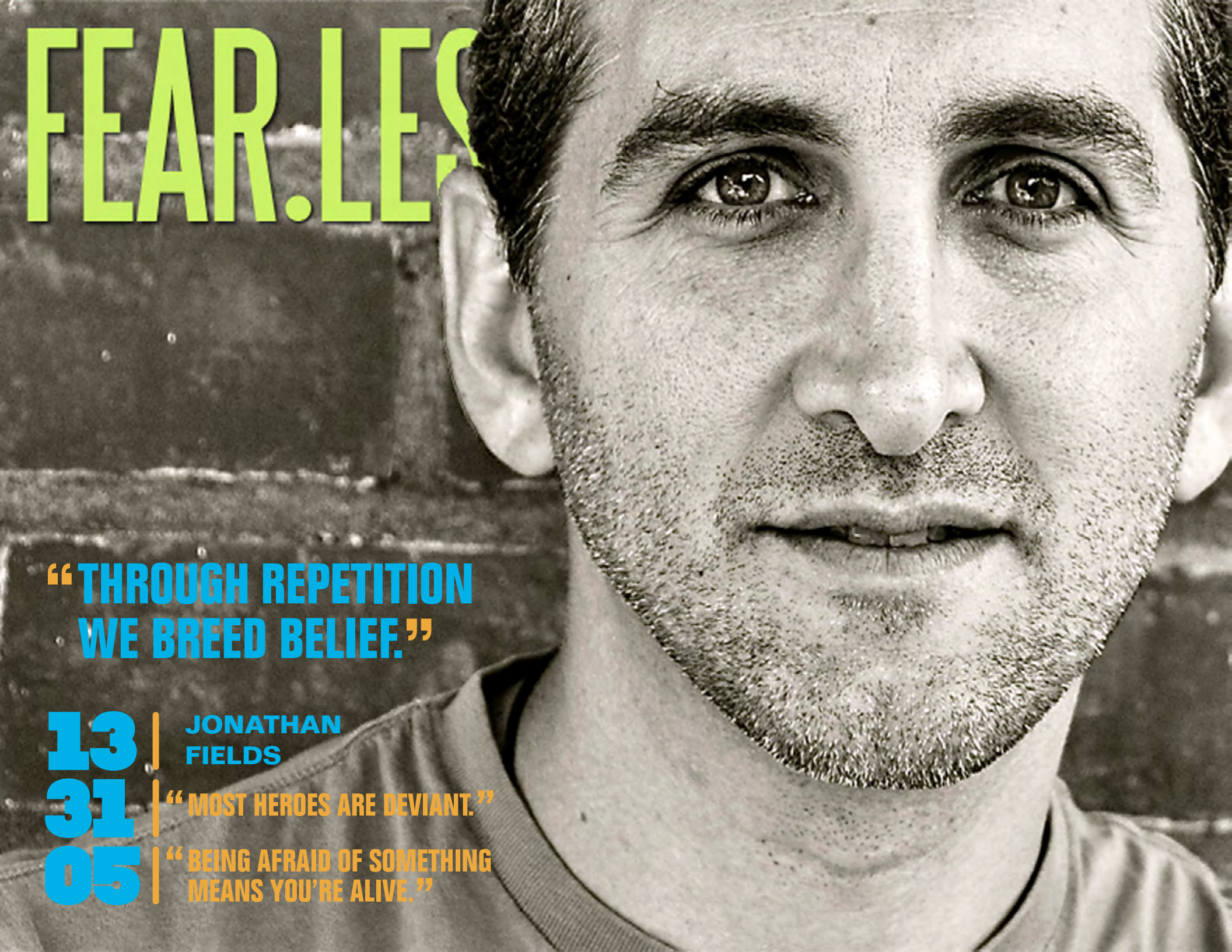
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# FEAR.LESS


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## COPYRIGHT

“It’s not the load that breaks you down;
It’s the way you carry it.”

- Lena Horne

> “You’re not going to get there if you quit. The only way it can happen is if you’re resilient and you continually pick yourself up.”

# CHASING THE FEAR

BRAD LUDDEN

**Ishita: You've been a champion white-water kayaker since you were a young kid, what got you into the sport?**

Brad: My mom decided that, during what was perhaps a mid-life crisis, she wanted to learn an extreme sport. She chose kayaking out of nowhere and then six months later my dad decided he wanted to try it too. This is Montana, where I grew up, so for the next three years, my sister and I would go along and watch from shore as they kayaked. It was fun to watch, but I really wanted to learn it. Finally when I was nine years old and I was old enough, our parents bought my sister and I our first kayaks. And actually, the first two years of kayaking for me were interesting because it was a total love/hate relationship.

**I: What do you meant love/hate - you didn't just love it at the time?**

B: To be honest, I hated it.

> "I was so overwhelmed by the power of the river and how intimidating it was, that I actually sold my kayak and quit a few years after I began."

I hated kayaking because of the fear involved. I was so overwhelmed by the power of the river and how scary and intimidating it was, that I actually sold my kayak and totally quit a few years after I began. I just felt that I never wanted to do it again.

**I: Wow – so it went that far, where you were so overwhelmed that you sold your kayak?**

B: By then I had just turned eleven, into my second season, and I would spend the whole day crying. I was so afraid of going out on the river. After a while my parents said, "Listen, you don't have to do this if you don't want to." My answer to that was, "Great. In that case, I'm not going to." So I got out of it. They probably knew all the time, knowing me and my competitive personality that I wouldn't sit out for long, but I did, I quit. And I sat along the river and watched everyone else for a long time. It was only as I was sitting by the side watching my sister for almost a whole season that sure enough, that feeling of "This is Ridiculous. I need to get out there! She's getting too much attention" Crept up inside of me. [laughs]

**I: So the lack of attention got you to start back up!**

B: Well, I just felt really left out. Everyone was having all this fun, coming back from camp at night talking about these great adventures. On top of that my sister was getting all these compliments and I thought, "Man, this sucks I'm not a part of that! I'm going to give it another shot." So I did. And the second time around created an entirely different perspective for me. Everything about it that I had hated, I began to love. So the fear that took me out of it in the first place was the exact same reason I got back into it.

**I: What was different this time? The river had the**

**same power, the intensity of the rapids still there. What changed?**

B: I actually remember the day that I really started to embrace getting back into it. I had a bad experience right when I first started again, and I remember thinking, "This is stupid, why did I get back into it?" A friend and coach who was helping me paddle took me aside and said "Brad, you're a great athlete. You're good at kayaking; the only reason you can't kayak is because you don't think you can -- you're defeating yourself." He told me to stay within ten feet of his kayak, take every stroke like I meant it, and to follow him down to the section of water I had just gotten scared on. He said, "We'll get down just fine." And so we paddled out and we did. We got down just fine. From there on, it was "Whoa, wait a minute, that was all mental; the only barrier between me and the sport is my own mind!" As soon as I realized that, a whole world opened up and I learned that my fear wasn't so bad, it was actually a good thing. Being afraid of something means you're alive, you're challenging yourself. Before long, I became addicted to that feeling, that fear at the top of the draw.

**I: I can't fathom the drop off of rapids like you kayak; liking that fear! So you became addicted to sort of "descending" off the top of these rapids?**

B: It was that feeling at the top of a really challenging rapid that just propelled and fuelled me! As I got better over time and got to chase bigger and bigger rapids, it was the same rush, to find the fear.

**I: So now it's totally shifted to you seeking the fear.**

B: You know, it's less the fear and more the reward that it's giving you. Doing something that scares you is one of the most rewarding things you can do for yourself, and I think Eleanor Roosevelt was right when she said, "You must do the things you think you cannot do." Living within your comfort zone is no way to go through life.

**I: Why do you think people need to do the things they fear?**

B: To learn the most about

"I had a bad experience right when I first started again, and I remember thinking, "This is stupid, why did I get back into it?""

ourselves. That's when we grow, our perspectives shift, it's when our confidence grows and we find the most joy. You're living on this high and proud of yourself. That's the cool thing about kayaking sitting above those rapids and knowing I made myself do that. I chose. And the coolest part is you chose to do something challenging and scary. At the end of the day that's a pretty great feeling when you can get through it.

**I: And if you fail?**

B: Well, the level I was at, if I failed it could have been really bad. There were a couple of years where I couldn't fail at all because it wasn't really an option. The consequences of the rapids we were doing were so severe that failure could potentially mean that you were going to wind up killing yourself.

**I: That's intense. Fortunately you didn't fail or kill yourself because right in the middle of your kayaking career you started helping others fight their fears. Tell us how you started First Descents and what it's about.**

B: My aunt was diagnosed with Cancer and after her diagnosis I had already begun to teach others how to kayak. I knew it was very therapeutic for me and I knew it could be for others as well. It turned out that that was a bit of a shot in the dark to think of starting an organization, but the fundamental idea was true. After I realized that it really was therapeutic for others, I started researching to see what resources were available to do something like this. After looking for a while, I saw there wasn't anything real, so I started putting two and two together and decided I needed to start First Descents to help people with Cancer.

> "At the end of the week, one of the gals came up to me and said, "That was the best week of my life." It was all I needed to hear."

**I: From a practical standpoint, how did you start the organization?**

B: My decision to do something was really the only clarity I had at that point in time. I didn't know how to start it, where to start, who to talk to, what I needed to do. I was 18 at the time and I really didn't have any business background or money. In most respects, if you look at it objectively, it was actually a poor decision! Or reckless. But I knew that once you realize that you're in a place to help someone, it's pretty hard to turn your back on that. I just knew if I wasn't going to do it then no one was.

**I: Starting any organization can be daunting, and you were just 18. What were your first steps?**

B: I tried to open every door I could find, see what was behind it, and one thing lead to another; things I couldn't see at the time of deciding to do this presented themselves over the next two years. Then in 2001 we hosted our first week of programming and I'll never forget it. At the end of the week, one of the gals came up to me and said, "That was the best week of my life." It was all I needed to hear, the only validation that I needed to make the decision right then and there that I would not stop working on this.

> "Honestly the very first thing I needed to do was to commit, period: "This will work, it will not fail.""

**I: What was the most important thing that kept you moving forward?**

B: For an athlete, sometimes you just need to take the risk. It's the same for entrepreneurs who when they set out to do something unknown they have to trust to a certain extent that by leaping, the ground will appear. Honestly the very first thing I needed to do was to commit, period: "This will work, it will not fail." I created a business plan. I tried to kind of conceptualize, write it out on paper. What is this? In hindsight, now it is established, a weeklong program, 15 year olds and up, using kayaking as a vehicle to deliver a form of therapy. But at the time, I didn't know any of the realistic steps to get there. Was I travelling into the path of already existing organizations? Did I get a fleet of kayaks? Did I go to kayak companies and try to get a sponsor? I didn't know what it looked like and so I had to build it.

All I know is once I built a plan, I took it and started showing it to people, "This is the idea I have. Will

you help me get it off the ground?" Almost immediately one of the first people I met was an attorney who's also a kayaker and he told me, "You're going to need a 501(c)(3). I asked, "What's that?" He told me what it was, how much it would cost, and that it would take six months. I freaked out, saying to myself "Oh my god." because I had no money and no idea about what to do, but he gave me a break and said "But don't worry about it. I'll do it. I think it's a great idea."

**I: That must have been a huge boost!**

B: I couldn't have seen that coming. He did my 501(c)(3). We get approved. I went out and created this promotional "Being a Dream" Run, with a logo and the wording, what it was and then things were falling into place. But I needed money and I needed a location. I remember right after getting the 501(c)(3) status a neighbour gave me a $25 check. I thought, "OK, well that proves that I can get money." Of course I needed a lot more but that was still proof. Then about a week later, Nike gave us ten thousand dollars.

**I: Wait, what? How in the world....**

B: They heard what I was doing and a manager at Nike asked me, "How are you going to pay for it?" I said, "I don't know yet. I'm working on that." About a week later, Nike had issued a $10,000 check to pay for the first program. But I still needed somewhere to put it! I was at this big outdoor convention maybe a month later, and I was approached by two Vail entrepreneurs. They wanted me to be their "ambassador" to a new white-water park they'd built in town. This was when I was still 18 and still a bit nomadic, so I said, "That sounds like a great gig." So they asked me, "What do we have to pay you?" And that's when the final light bulb went off. I said, "Listen, you don't have to pay me if you guys can help bring this thing to life." And I showed them everything I had and told them I need a board and I need a town that would stand behind the organization. They said, "Done. We love it."

**I: I think it's awesome that you were able to make that connection.**

B: Yeah, I guess. Unknowingly! I think I was so passionate and determined, and it was all I cared about. If I hadn't had that and they had asked how much they'd have to pay me, I probably would have told them to just go and talk to my agent.

> "It goes back to the confidence that kayaking gave me to believe in myself and believe that I'm capable of succeeding."

And it keeps getting more and more serendipitous from there. And challenging. As a business grows and succeeds it is met with more and more challenges.

**I: Who helped you with these business challenges and what did they say?**

B: My advisors have changed all along the way based on the needs of the organization, and my current mentor now is our executive director who is playing the role for free. He was a board member and is a very successful young entrepreneur and he loves this organization. He has taught me more about business than anyone in the world. Recently, as we grow and get bigger and bigger and our budget this year is

over a million dollars, it's a whole different animal than a ten thousand dollar a year organization. So he's taught me to be patient and to focus on the bigger picture and to not be reactive to everything that comes my way.

**I: Did any lessons from kayaking crossover into helping you start and run First Descents?**

B: For me it goes back to the confidence that kayaking gave me to believe in myself and believe that I'm capable of succeeding. When you get down to the bottom of a Class V or VI rapid that no one's ever kayaked, you're pretty confident at that point. The only certainty in starting a business or non-profit is that you're gong to fail a lot; you're going to be told "No" a lot; it's picking yourself up and getting back in and continuing because you know that the takeout is at the end of the river. You're not going to get there if you quit. So it's realizing that the only person that can make it happen is you and the only way it can happen is if you're resilient and you continually pick yourself up and keep going.
I get calls from aspiring social entrepreneurs and they always ask me "What's the one piece of advice you can give me?" I always say, "Just stick with it. Period. Because the only reason this thing will fail is because you let it, you walked from it. Don't stop breathing life into this thing. Don't stop giving it CPR. It will get there." In my own case, I was fortunate that my mother was really supportive of me starting First Descents. My dad pretty much said, "Uh, you should probably go to college" but my mom kept saying, "This is an amazing idea and I think it will be successful." There were days when I would be in tears, "I can't do this. It's not going to work" and my mom would be there to tell me "Yes you can and it will work." I had people who, when I couldn't see it for myself, told me there was a

light at the end of the tunnel. So that's the first advice I give to people. We work with the young adults in the program on a much more literal level when they're in the river to positively encourage them to not give up. Safety is an absolute first, but if I see that they're giving up because they're choosing to, not because they're limited by their health, then I usually have a sit down and say, "Hey, give it one more try" and kind of push them enough so that by the end of the day they always walk up and say, "Thank you."

**I: What do you say to people who are really terrified of kayaking?**

B: It's easier when I'm actually with them because if I can get them to the edge of the water and say, "Let's just walk together. Put your gear on, let's get everything ready and let's walk down there and see how it feels." We get to the river, and they're like "Oh, I'm really nervous." I say "Okay. You can stop at any time. You're in control. Now get in the water and see how it feels. I'll stay right here with you and I won't let anything happen." I kind of walk them through it and next thing you know they're upside down in the kayak, they're swimming, they're having fun, they're paddling. A lot of times simply taking that first step, getting yourself to commit is the hardest. Once you do that, before you know it, you're into it. I think the first step is always the hardest; to coax someone into that first step is the challenge of getting them on the rest of the journey.

## BRAD LUDDEN

Brad Ludden is a professional white-water kayaker and founder of the non-profit organization, **First Descents**. Travelling internationally to over 40 countries since the age of 12, Brad has competed in some of the world's most prestigious kayaking competitions, making over one hundred "first descents" in treacherous rapids. In 2001, at age eighteen, he founded First Descents, a free program for young adults with Cancer to learn the skills and confidence necessary to make their own first descents.Starting with about a dozen participants inVail, Colorado, the program has grown to serve over 600 young adults with Cancer and now includes rock climbing and mountaineering.Sponsors include Nike, Subaru, Gagger, and Kokatat. Brad has been featured on theToday Show, Last Call with Carson Daly, and **CNN**.

# Making It A Reality

> "We are more similar to Pavlov's dogs than we ever want to admit. Through repetition we breed belief, create a picture of failure and then hit 'spin'."

An Interview with
JONATHAN FIELDS

**Ishita: When did you feel "Enough is enough" in terms of the lifestyle you were leading?**

Jonathan: This is going back more than a dozen years now. I was working as a lawyer in a large Manhattan firm with a lot of prestige. It was a great job – a power job – making a great living, but I just didn't like what I was doing. I'm a firm believer that people's bodies tell them when they're making wrong decisions long before people tell them, and if you listen to what your body tells you, you can probably make changes a lot earlier. Personally, I was tired. I was exhausted, overweight, out of shape, and I had stopped doing all the things I loved doing. At one point we got a deal where I worked the better part of three weeks with very little sleep and huge amounts of stress. We had to close the deal because we were doing an offering in a foreign country with changing laws, and there was no wiggle room. So we worked

really crazy hours.

A few days before we pushed the button on the deal, I felt this awful pain in the middle of my body, but I ignored it. That's just what you did when you had something this pressure-filled on the horizon; We were on a deal, there were no excuses, if there was something I had to take care of, I figured I'd take care of it later. But each hour the pain got progressively worse until the last 12 hours or so, I couldn't stand up straight, could barely breathe, and there was this screaming pain in the middle of my body. I had to just keep working through it though because we were in the final stage and I knew everyone else was working really hard too, and then finally we hit the button. I remember I left right after that but then my recollection gets fuzzy. I think I went home, slept for a few hours and then woke up still doubled over. I went to my

doctor and he said "There's something really large growing inside your body since the last time I saw you." He was a little freaked out too, and I ended up going straight to the hospital and into emergency surgery, because apparently, my immune system had just shut down from the stress and lack of sleep.

It was an infection that grew so large in the middle of my body that it looked like a hole through my intestines from the outside in. Thankfully, it was operable, and I was in and out quickly and completely recovered, but it was a serious wake up call for me. For two things in particular: I was doing something I didn't really care about, and I was completely ignoring the things I really did really care about personally and professionally.

The carrot that had dangled in front of me - partnership in a large law firm with a lot of money - I saw that I didn't really have an interest in being a partner anymore. I sort of realized that I needed to start making my decisions in a different way.

> "I'd love to say the light bulb just magically went on that moment, but I'm a little more stubborn than that. I had to get hit over the head a few times."

**I: Did you realize though, at the time, that there ways to make money doing what you loved that would still let you live well overall? Did the medical wake-up call instill that new thinking in you?**

J: I'd love to say the light bulb just magically went on that moment, but I'm a little more stubborn than that. I had to get hit over the head a few times. But that was one moment that really precipitated my thinking much more seriously about what I wanted – both what I wanted to get from my working life, but also what I wanted to give, and it was also a real catalyst for me to start to shift more into thinking about the impact I wanted to have beyond the money I wanted to make.

That was a big shift in mindset and that really set in motion some big changes. I stayed in the law for the better part of a year after that, but I knew from the moment I had my surgery that I was leaving. As it became clear, I started to make a list of the things that really made me come alive, a lot of them were things that most people didn't make a lot of money doing. I was confident that I could figure out a better mousetrap, and I could actually do them a different way to figure out what I needed to make to live well. But I'm also a realist, and I knew it was going to take some time, and I was really fortunate in that the job that I had at the time making the money I was making. So essentially, I scaled back my living, started to bank as much as I could bank, knowing that I'd need a cushion – and in fact I did, because my next move I went from making six figures to making 12 bucks an hour as a personal trainer – so that cushion I saved in those 9 months or so before I made the jump allowed me to do that. But that's also probably unusual – most of the people I've talked to and that I've become friends with who've done something similar – I've seen that the more common route is to build something on the side, keep your day job, and know that it's

just funding the next leg of your journey for you, until that passion-driven source of revenue or business starts to grow big enough or grow legs to show you that it really can work. And then at some point down the road – months or even years - you get the opportunity to step into it.

**I: Was it hard for you to go from the lifestyle you led and with money you made, to being perceived as a beginner with much less income?**

J: Yes and no – from an ego standpoint, for a brief period of time, it sucked. Because here I was, wearing $2,000 dollar Armani suits and making a great living, at a prestigious job at a law firm, and the next day I'm a personal trainer hanging out in running shoes, tights, and ripped-up t-shirts in Central Park. I was a little terrified my old clients or colleagues would bump into me and say, "What are you doing?" They're on the road

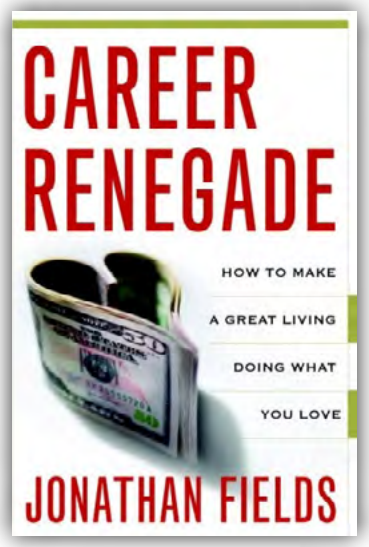
> "That mentality – a desperate, scarcity mentality, in terms of what you should be doing for a living – was passed on for a few generations in this country."

to wealth and power and fame, and I'm on the road to doing something radically different. I was really afraid of being judged. It took me some time to get through it and I slowly realized that one of the things that the law did teach me is that I do have the ability to devour, digest, and integrate huge amounts of information in a relatively short period of time. That's the thing about working in a law firm – it's a skill that comes in really handy, and it's one of the things that I'm thankful for about my time there. Also, up to the point where I went into law, I've always had a real passion for health and fitness businesses for the better part of my life – both the business and the way that human beings exist, physically, mentally, and spiritually. So I already had a pretty strong background in reading and studying in the wellness area. It was more a matter of getting back up to speed with it.

So yes, I was initially terrified. I had images of myself hanging out in Central Park doing sit-ups with a client, and some billion-dollar former client walking by and saying "Man! What happened to this guy?" And in fact, when I left the firm, it was tradition to send around the "Departure Memo." So every day, if anyone was leaving the firm, everyone else would get the "Departure Memo," describing where that person was going next. It would say things like "I'm leaving the firm because I've become a General Counsel or a partner at this firm, etc. etc." Mine essentially said, "I'm quitting my law career to go and start a health and fitness business."

Those weren't the exact words, but I was pretty nervous about how that would be received. What I found interesting was that most people at my level – mid-level associates – said in hushed tones, "What a shame. What a waste" but the people who had already made it to the partner level; those were the ones who

were the most supportive. They slipped me notes "Go for it, keep me in the loop, this is amazing." and that was an eye-opener for me. Because here were people who actually had the golden ticket, who were going where everybody wanted to go, and they were saying, "Go somewhere else." So that was powerful for me. The other thing about handling judgment is the more closely aligned what you do is with who you are, the more confidence you have that you're doing the right thing. It begins to shield you to a certain extent from judgment – not completely – but it really helps knowing what you're doing really resonates with who you are. There's a secondary effect because when you do that, often it accelerates your success in that field, and when people start to see you succeed, then very quickly that fear of judgment begins to fall away. Because you feel like you have nothing to prove anymore. You've done what's in your heart, you've done what makes you come alive, you're having the impact you want, and you're generating whatever cash you need to live well in the world, and there's nothing to judge. In fact, at a certain point, what I found with people who have done similar things in other fields is that a lot of people who judge them earlier circle back to them down the road once they become successful and ask how they did it.




**I: People are searching for the same thing, I think.**

> "A lot of people focus on the "What if I fail?" question, and that's what stops so many people from starting."

J: I think so. I'm 44 years old, so I'm sort of two generations removed from the Great Depression, and I think that there was a time in this country where it really wasn't about passion, it wasn't about coming alive, it was just about doing whatever you needed to do to keep your family safe and put food on the table. That mentality – a desperate, scarcity mentality, in terms of what you should be doing for a living – I think was passed on for a few generations in this country. But there's been a real backlash against it, and it's been interesting to see what's happened in the last two years in this country also, and how mindsets are changing – a huge number of layoffs, and a lot of the jobs that people are being laid off from simply don't exist anymore. And there was a promise for a lot of decades in the U.S. from big corporations that said, "Hey, give us your life, and we'll give you your retirement," and what people discovered was that that wasn't a real promise. So to me there's a huge groundswell of entrepreneurship that is driven not by the quest not to make a boatload of money, but to make enough to live well in the world and support your family, but also to do something meaningful and enjoy what you do.

**I: Have you encountered people who say in a negative or selfish way, "How can you focus on yourself and what you love?"**

J: Yes I have, and I actually understand that argument. Earlier in life, I don't think you hear that a lot because there's not that much on the line. But when you're further into life, if you have a mortgage and kids and a family to support, that's actually a common experience - people saying that you're walking away from your responsibilities. That's one reason why I think a lot of people who make this type of change later in life don't just make a leap, they start building on the side first. The conversation isn't really "Please support me while I walk away from everything", it's "Listen, I'm doing something on the side, and I'm not crazy, let's have a real conversation about it – this is why I'm doing it, this is what's motivating me. It's tearing me apart emotionally to keep doing what I'm doing, and I'm confident that I can figure out a way to do something more meaningful and impactful, and generate enough money to support the family." It really starts by saying, "Let's talk about what I want to do, and help me figure out if it's reasonable and possible; how can I change it to make it work." You do a lot of work and research and have your plan in hand before you start to talk to people closest to you because then you can have a much more intelligent conversation and they'll see that you've put a lot of thought into it. In the end, even if those closest to you are fearful of stepping up and supporting you wholeheartedly though. And it's much easier to say to them "I understand that you're very concerned, but what I'm asking for now is your forbearance, just for you to give me enough room to prove that what I'm talking about is real, and for it to start to grow to a point where it can demonstrate its own viability."

> "People would say to me, "You're very calm and methodical. You're just very easy on the outside." And I'd think to myself, "If you only knew what was going on inside my head right now, it'd be scary!""

**I: People respond to tangible steps and actually seeing the plan more than just ideas. But how did you overcome the inertia of starting?**

J: I think a lot of people focus on the "What if I fail?" question, and that's what stops so many people from starting. Many people stop the process there, and it's a shame because that's only a third of the process through, and it's only one of three really important questions to ask. Question one is: "What if I fail?" and you paint that scenario and an equally vivid scenario of how you'll recover from the failure. But the next questions, which no one asks are: "What if I do nothing?" and "What if I succeed?" One must paint equally vivid scenarios of the answers to those two questions as well. What most people find is if they're on a path that's emptying them out, that's sucking the life out of them, the most horrifying option is generally not

the "What if I fail?" answer but the "What if I do nothing?" answer, because what you discover is that there's no sideways in life. A lot of times we think if we just keep on keeping on, and we're kind of unhappy now, 20 years later we'll still just be kind of unhappy, and we won't be so bad. That's not true. You're either going up, or you're going down – there really is no sideways. If you're kind of unhappy now, 20 years later there's a really good chance you're going to be absolutely miserable. In addition to that, you'll be more stressed, less fit and perhaps overweight, more at risk for all sorts of disease, and all of this will put a strain on your relationships and friendships. So there really is no sideways.

If you ask, "What if I fail?" and think about your recovery, it's often not so bad because most things are recoverable - you'll get through it and move on. When you ask, "What if I do nothing?" very often that's

> **"With every threshold, when you cross into a completely new area where you're uncertain about the landscape and your ability to conform to that landscape, there's anxiety."**

the horrifying scenario you want to avoid. Then you ask, "What if I succeed?" and it can be really appealing and motivating. There's a final step that I add to the process, personally. We are more similar to Pavlov's dogs than we ever want to admit with how our brains work. Through repetition, we breed belief and we create a picture of the failure scenario and then hit "spin." We just keep thinking about it and spinning this awful scenario, and through that repetition it becomes the only outcome we believe in – we convince ourselves that that's the only answer. But if you very deliberately stop that pattern, and say "Ok, I've identified the failure scenario and how I recover from it, I've identified the neutral scenario, and now I have a really vivid picture of what it will look like when I succeed," and then deliberately hit "spin" on that success scenario, then that becomes the thing that you continually visualize and move towards. This is a technique that I use in my own business and life.

**I: Is that something you do on a daily basis so as not to operate out of scarcity mentality?**

J: It's something I try to do every day. I've gained enough confidence from failing and coming back from it enough times now. Anyone who's an entrepreneur in any way, shape or form lives with a certain level of anxiety because there is a great deal of uncertainty. You just never know. I've found that visualizing where you want to go and what you want to do on a daily basis and then to get there is a matter of finding your way through that anxiety. It's also a lifestyle technique, to be honest. One of the businesses I ended up going into was owning a yoga studio, and I taught yoga for seven years. That practice really helped me to breathe through my anxiety on a daily basis.

It was also having a clear picture of what I wanted to

build and visualizing from there. Every day I would really check in with where I was going and say, "This is where I'm going and in two or three years, this is what I want my life to look like. This is what I want my day to look like and this is what I want my business to look like." On a daily practice level, two things were also essential for me: One is any form of exercise. Exercise is immensely useful in handling the anxiety that goes with uncertainty, especially as entrepreneurs. I also delved into eastern philosophies and yoga and started to discover different approaches to relaxation and/or mind response training, what the eastern world calls meditation or mindfulness. It is a powerful tool for me, but not an easy practice to develop. Once it's a more regular practice, it's immensely powerful and can give you not only clarity, but also space and the ability to move through anxiety with much more ease.

**I: A paradox: a calm entrepreneur! What helped you keep visualizing and keep your focus on building?**

J: It's somewhat bizarre because I developed a reputation where people would say to me, "You're very calm and methodical. You're just very easy on the outside." And I'd think to myself, "If you only knew what was going on inside my head right now, it'd be scary!" One benefit from my time in law was that we were hired to do things that basically no one else could do, and were paid a lot of money to do it. Generally these were tasks where you had a short amount of time to accomplish an insane amount of work in a near impossible deadline. When you first get into a situation like that it's totally terrifying, and it stays terrifying for a while. But what you start to realize is that when you just do the work that's in front of you on a consistent basis and focus on that, you start to see that when you do that - just what's in front of you - somehow you get done what you needed to get done on deadline. And when you do that enough times, when you look at a project and you say, "Man, this is insane, this is crazy. This is impossible" And then 72 hours later or two weeks later it's done because you started working and just didn't stop until it was done, you start to realize a few things. One is that a lot of things that seem insurmountable and beyond

achievement just because it's a mass amount of work in a short period of time are actually do-able. They're accomplishable. But you have to get out of your head and just start doing, start acting.

Focusing on what was right in front of me was really powerful. The fact that I was able to do that repeatedly and have that experience with law - of being given impossible tasks which I proved to be possible - really was a resource when I moved into entrepreneurship. I drew upon it very much, actually. We spend so much time thinking, "What could happen?" "How am I going to do this?" rather than just stepping up and doing it. A lot of times I visualized not only the end goal, but also the precise tasks I needed to do to get myself to a good spot on a daily basis. There's research on this called process simulation, which supposedly yields better results because people take action earlier in the process than if they had just visualized the outcome.

**I: So although you loved your new business, did you initially get overwhelmed by the workload?**

J: I have to say no for two reasons. I was trained to work at an insane level from my career before that. Law is a tough industry, especially in New York, especially when you're midlevel in a large company because the focus is on hours. So what I started to realize was that I still worked a lot of hours. But when I'm working on something I genuinely believe in and am passionate about, where I gained the ability to create the culture and choose the people I surrounded myself with, the hours became somewhat meaningless because it was fun to me. It wasn't about total hours but about what you're doing during those hours and whom you're doing it with. That makes a huge difference in the way you perceive the impact of hours. That understanding was huge for me.

**I: Have your fears changed since you've been on the entrepreneurship path?**

J: Career-wise, I've made a number of jumps since then. I opened one company and then sold it. I opened another company and then sold that. Now I'm operating much more in the online and media world and write books and speak. With every threshold, when you cross into a completely new area where you're uncertain about the landscape and your ability to conform to that landscape, there's anxiety. Something I want to start doing more of is speaking publicly. On one hand it terrifies me. And on the other hand I absolutely love it once I get past the first two minutes. So for me, there's a huge unknown there. I have a number of speaking gigs lined up in the coming months that will be in front of much larger audiences than I've ever spoken to before. And whenever you ramp up the level of uncertainty like that there's always anxiety and fear.

But I think the thing to do is acknowledge that the fear and anxiety are there. When you encounter something new, those feelings always come up and it's a good thing because it means you're moving forward. For me, the best way to move through that is to just run head long into it and what allows me to do that are the breathing exercises and other things that put your body and mind at ease.

**I: What's something you know for a fact now, that perhaps you only believed before?**

J: I know now that the people you choose to surround yourself with are massively important in terms of their willingness to support you and in their alignment of who you are and what you believe in. People say, "If you do what you love the money

will follow." I actually don't believe that. I do believe it's critically important to work hard to figure out, not necessarily your life purpose, but what elements and qualities of work make you come alive. Who are the people? What's the culture? What are the processes and activities? What impact do I want to have and on whom do I want to have it on? It's really important to spend a lot of time on these questions because the more you can align what you do with the genuine answers to those questions the more deeply fulfilled you are by what you do. That doesn't mean money will follow soon after on a professional level, but it will give you energy and the ability to go and figure out how to generate income if you really need to. I paid lip service to that for a long time, but now I really believe that it's mission critical to find out what your gifts are and then build your working life around that.

## JONATHAN FIELDS

**Jonathan Fields** calls himself a "giddy dad, husband, and serial wellness-industry entrepreneur." He began his career as an attorney at the SEC and then as a mid-level associate at a prestigious law firm, only to realize the stress was killing him. A medical emergency forced him to re-imagine his life, upon which Jonathan left law to pursue his passions in the wellness and health industry - starting a successful life-style yoga studio "Sonic Yoga" which combined his life-long interest in wellness and yogaW, and now as a writer and speaker. He writes about marketing and social media and blogs at **Jonathanfields.com** and has spoken at TED "Turning Fear Into Fuel" and is the author of ***Career Renegade: How to make a great living doing what you love.***

> “Impatience goes directly to intolerance. So if one doesn’t have a large tolerance for feelings then they’re going to be very impatient.”

# The Way of the Warrior

## An Interview with BINDU WILES

**Ishita: So you're a blogger and writer. What was the biggest surprise when you started your blog?**

Bindu: I would say it was a really, really steep learning curve for me, almost straight up. Like Apollo 11, perhaps. I got a lot of traffic and contacts and everything started to happen at the same time - the business was growing faster than I had the technological and business skills for. I just wanted to write but I'll admit that once I saw the traffic and comments, I was a bit hooked.

> "I think humor is the most wonderful coping mechanism for the hard times in life. When I don't have a sense of humor, I get quite panicked."

**I: Did you have something specific you wanted to share with people?**

B: I wanted to share my life, my process, funny stories of life because I think life is so entertaining. People are characters and the stories and the things that we find ourselves in are so amazing. A slight change of angle can take something from a tragedy to a comedy. And life is about sharing experience. Look at all the people in this Starbucks right now – there are 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 – like 18 laptops and everyone's typing away so into their thing. What are they – what are we – all doing? But I just wanted to tell stories and maybe share some insight with people.

**I: What do you mean by tragedy giving way to comedy?**

B: One of the gifts that my family gave me is humor. Both my parents and my siblings are extremely funny, in a very dark way, so I'm wired that way also, but I think humor is the most wonderful coping mechanism for the hard times in life. When I don't have a sense of humor, I get quite panicked.

> "A slight change of angle can take something from a tragedy to a comedy."

That's when I know I've lost perspective. I'm going down with the ship if I can't find some kind of humor in the pain.

I'm just now starting to get a little sense of humor back after a few months of being in pain and having no humor and feeling very panicked. Humor is like space. It's eternal space and it's everything to me. But I just go around and I look at people and experiences and think, "It's really funny in some way." I'm not laughing at people. I think I'm seeing the human condition, what we're all trying to be.

**I: I like that. Humor is way more expansive than fear – fear is totally claustrophobic.**

B: Fear is claustrophobic. When we're afraid, everything narrows down. Our view gets really tight, and we're not in a very long lens. When everything narrows, there's no sunlight. It's dark and fear has a very narrowed down, isolating effect.

> "Humor is like space."

**I: Sharon Salzburg once wrote about the term "shelter in place" about not running away from your experience, but finding comfort and safety in the midst of fear. Getting space even while you're in the middle of a tough experience, like feeling anxiety and panic.**

B: Or abandonment. Rejection.

**I: Insecurity.**

B: One of the things I love about the Buddhist teachings is that they are counterintuitive. So when you're afraid, you think running is the best thing to do, but "shelter in place" is actually doing the opposite of what the lizard brain wants us to do, which is run for our lives. But if we can stay in the place and build a relationship with anxiety, abandonment, betrayal, people lying to us, people going back on their word, people saying one thing and taking it back - whatever it is - it's really fascinating to redefine what you can do with things and experiences that happen to you. There are more options than running.

**I: You wrote that fear or anger of any kind favors extreme action – like running away or lashing out or knocking the daylights out of the first person you see – and that extreme action is actually the wrong thing to do.**

B: Any kind of polarity or extreme action is not trustworthy. You have to be suspicious of actions that are extreme because extremes are meant to repress or indulge, meaning to not say anything or to completely run away. But neither of them is trustworthy. The middle way, I think, is the trustworthy, dependable path. One of the actions that puts me into the middle way is to just pause and to take no action at all until things settle down and aren't so acute and inflamed. Then I see what can I do. One of the main teachings that I've been working with in my life for about seven years now is to learn how to tolerate my feelings without taking action. The first part is to learn how to tolerate the feelings that arise. It's huge.

> "If you're actually learning to tolerate your feelings and not take action, you realize quickly how much strength and bravery it takes."

> “Any kind of polarity or extreme action is not trustworthy. You have to be suspicious of actions that are extreme because extremes are meant to repress or indulge, meaning to not say anything or to completely run away.”

And I’m not talking irritation at the bank line or having a bad day; I’m talking about when you have physical reactions to feelings, you feel things so deeply. Like crawling on your hands and knees, thinking you’re going to kill someone or you can’t tolerate it and it’s time to jump off the building. Intense feelings. So it’s about learning to tolerate them, let them arise, experience them, feel them in the body, notice what’s happening, but to not take any action.

**I: I’ve experienced how difficult that is. Sometimes not taking action is actually the most active thing you can do. Lashing out is the passive route, because it’s easy and natural. Restraining yourself is much harder.**

B: It’s very, very difficult. If you’re actually learning to tolerate your feelings and not take action, you realize quickly how much strength and bravery it takes. Also when people “Do things to us,” we’re on the receiving end of people’s actions, so it’s very difficult to not act out and to just take it.

Perception is so close to being in life, and to perceive that somebody is hurting you, it’s natural to not want to be hurt. So you’re going to fight back, you feel it’s the right thing to do to protect yourself, to not be killed or harmed. It’s very profound to work with the mind and to come from a passionate place when the stakes are high and people are  hurting you to say, “They’re projecting, they


> "The more I get to know my anger, the less angry I've become."

have their own pain." And that's why it's so important to have actual teachers, because they can be a model for us for how to really live. It's like the Rinpoches in the Tibetan lineage who allow others to project their baggage onto them. I don't know how they do it, but they do it as a way to benefit others, to be of service because people need somewhere to project their stuff. It's incredible. But they can do it because they're so anchored in who they are. They couldn't do it if they were identified with small mind. They're identified and steeped in and completely emerged with enlightened mind, one with nature, with who they are. So it passes right through them like a screen door. For me it sticks, I'm still in the sticky phase. I think people can become enlightened in their lifetime, and really when they learned what enlightenment is, it was a ten-degree difference of perception. Only ten degrees. If you can shift that perception of yourself just ten degrees, it's not really unattainable. Of course that ten percent is the hardest part, probably the most challenging part.

**I: OK, so you pause. You notice what strong emotion is coming up and try to remain without acting.**

B: Sometimes you have to hold your seat for days or for months. Everything arises and passes, but as in the principle of impermanence; people think, "Well, I've been doing this for a week, enough." No no no. Sometimes you have to hold for years.

**I: But we're impatient.**

B: Our relationship with time is strange. Impatience goes directly to intolerance. So if one doesn't have a large tolerance for feelings then they're going to be very impatient. The antidote to anger in Buddhism is patience - to learn to slow down, to wait - these are very difficult things in the emotional realm.

**I: I can attest to that. Anger in particular is one that really holds the reigns and makes me want to take extreme action.**

B: Of course. I mean, we don't want to feel it. We just don't. Our emotions are what cause us to feel we're going to die. We feel so hurt at times, and anger

> "To be a warrior means to be in touch with the genuine art of sadness, our broken heartedness, to feel our feelings, to be vulnerable."

is a way to make us feel like we're not going to die. So although it's so destructive, it's also a survival mechanism.

**I: It's surprisingly destructive.**

B: Anger has been my main emotion for forty years. There's a tremendous amount of intelligence in anger. But anger unbridled, anger full of heat, it's very destructive and mostly to the person that's angry. Still, it has been my greatest teacher. I could never condemn anger or say it's a lesser emotion than depression or other things. Anger has been the most important teacher of my life. So anger is powerful, but run amuck it's very bad.

The more I get to know my anger, the less angry I've become. The minute we befriend the dark thing, it turns into a harmless thing albeit inside a huge, scary dragon. So my journey with anger has not really been to harness it, but instead to make friends with it. As opposed to recognizing that I 'have to' or 'should' own my anger, it's more about choosing to own it. It's powerful. It's a rush. But it's interesting. I have more fear now then I did when I was 27 or 32, when I was more angry.

**I: You have a vivid way of writing and translating raw experience, which is the reason I started to read your blog.**

B: Raw experience is a gift. If you think about your feelings, authentic feelings are the things that kind of make us crawl around on the ground, on the dark side, and on the sunny side it's ecstasy. Most of the people I know are somewhere in the middle on a scale of one to ten, they're a seven and they don't want to go too dark and they don't want to go too sunny. It's a protective measure. But to have an authentic feeling is a total gift, and that's what you

get from being "raw." The criticisms I've gotten in life have been, "Oh, you're doing too much and you're hypersensitive and you're too emotional." That's painful to hear, but on the flipside, the feeling of humanity I've experienced has been incredible.

**I: So you're sort of a warrior, living with these raw experiences. You're willing to go as high and low as your experience can go.**

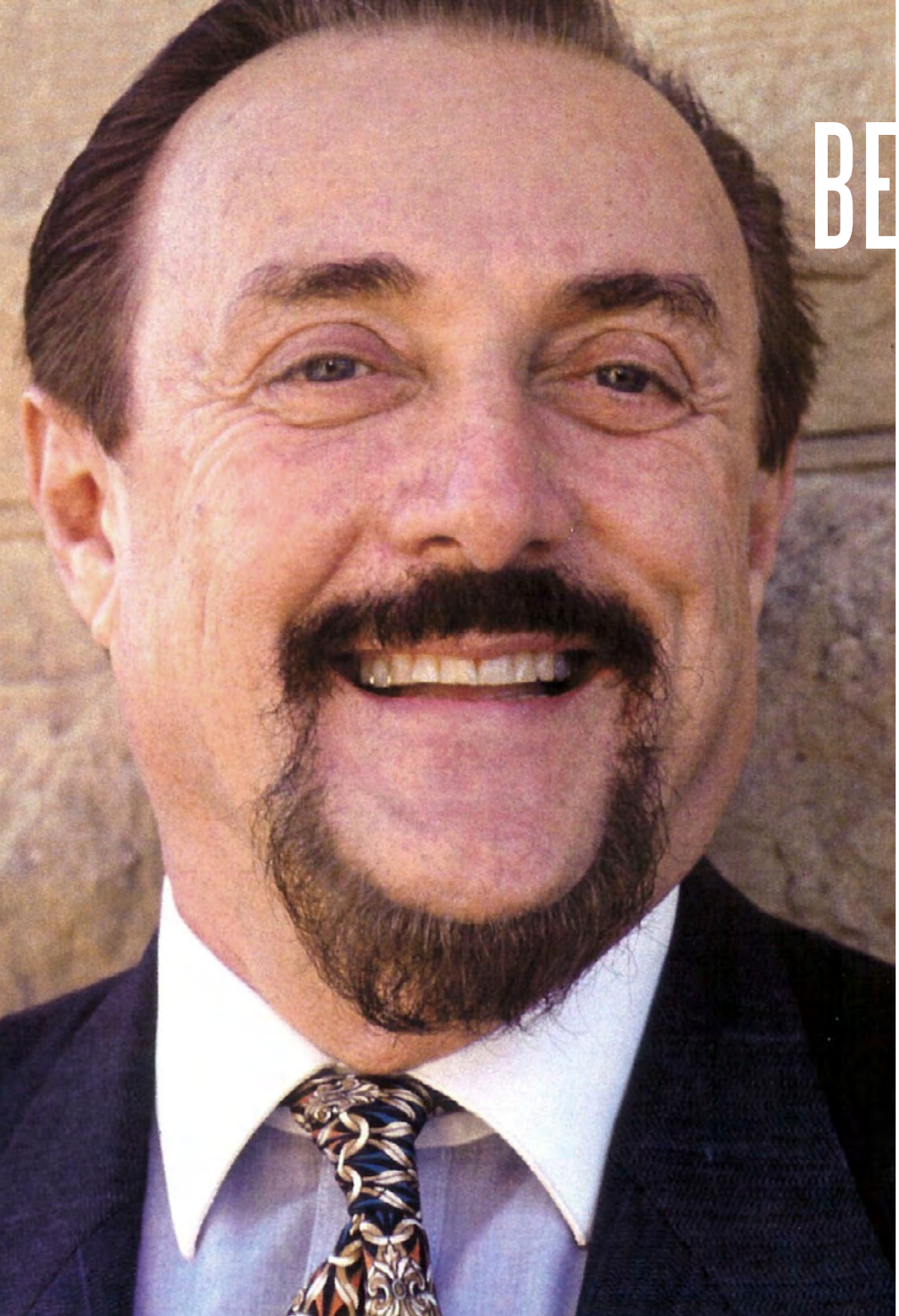
B: I appreciate that you view me like that because it's a high compliment. That's everything. If I got to the end of my life and stood in front of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and he said to me, "You were a good warrior. You did well." I would feel my life was worth it. To be a warrior means to be in touch with the genuine art of sadness, our broken heartedness, to feel our feelings, to be vulnerable. When you're vulnerable things penetrate you, things really hurt, you bond with people, you have intimacy with people. You have relationships and things don't work out and everyone has their reasons and things for not working out and instead of covering that over and saying, "I'm cool. Whatever, let's move on." you really feel it and cry and truly feel it to your core.

For example, Trungpa Rinpoche was very good friends with Suzuki Roshi, who had cancer and was dying. Trungpa Rinpoche went to visit him, knowing it was the last time he would ever see his friend. He cried so hard that he broke blood vessels in his eyes, and this is a guy who's enlightened. People occasionally think, "Oh, they're enlightened. they don't feel their emotions," but it's actually the opposite. My therapist recently went to Nepal on a meditation retreat. I told her, "I'm really going to miss you and I feel embarrassed that I'm going to miss you." She said, "Bindu, when the teachers leave each other, they sob. They sob and then it's over and they go onto the next thing."

That's a warrior, when you can feel deeply and connect deeply with people. If I had that kind of life at the end, that would be good.

## BINDU WILES

Bindu Wiles is a creative consultant, writer, and blogger who holds an MFA in creative non-fiction from Sarah Lawrence College. She conducts E-Writing workshops to help writers shape, polish, and refine their work and has been a student of Tibetan Buddhism and a practicing Buddhist for 20 years. "Bindu" means "blue pearl" the point containing the universe.



# BE A POSITIVE DEVIANT

> *"You can't be foolhardy; you can't jump in a river to save somebody knowing that you're a poor swimmer or that the water is so cold you're unlikely to survive."*

An Interview with
PHIL ZIMBARDO

> "Test anxiety was a general case of people who make their performance equivalent to their ego."

**Ishita: You've had a long and varied career - have you explored fear in your work, in social or cultural situations?**

Phil: When I was a graduate student at Yale I was part of a program exploring children's test-taking anxiety. Children, regardless of their ability, panic when they have to take a test or when they are being evaluated. I did collaborative research and we looked at how and why some children become very anxious and some children try to defend against it by pretending not to be anxious but in fact they are.

**I: Testing is controversial in many ways, what did you learn from this exploration?**

P: It's the relationship between your ego and your performance. So that when you saw that you did poorly it wasn't simply you doing poorly on this exam, it meant, "I'm a poor person. I'm an inadequate person and people won't like me or respect me or worse, love me." So test anxiety was a general case of people who make their performance equivalent to their ego.

**I: But for you personally, you didn't see it that way? You saw tests as challenge for yourself?**

P: Yes, partly because I was a good student. I worked very hard. I did my homework. But then when I got to Stanford University after I did the infamous Stanford


Prison experiment, I began to study shyness as a self-imposed fear of the other. Again, I was never personally shy so my research isn't biographical. But the research on shyness highlighted the fact that many people create what I call a silent, self-imposed prison of shyness.

**I: Can you talk a bit about the Stanford Prison Study?**

P: The Stanford Prison Experiment was one in which the authorities took away your freedom. Student volunteers of the Stanford Prison Study were arrested by the city police in a simulated arrest. So the authorities took away their freedom and only the authorities, the parole board, could give it back.

**I: The implications of the experiment are still debated today, but where did the exploration and the conclusions lead you?**

> "In fact, recent research shows that shyness is steadily increasing, at least in America"

P: I began to think of all the ways in which we as people in general surrender our basic freedoms. Freedom of association, freedom of speech. And shyness popped into my mind. In 1972 I began to study the causes, correlates and consequences of shyness. What we discovered was amazing. Roughly 40% of all the people we surveyed -- more than 10,000 people around the world -- considered themselves to be currently shy. Another 40% said, "I used to be shy but I outgrew it." And 15% said they were situationally shy, that is, "When I go out on a blind date or when my mother makes me play the piano for the neighbors, etc. then I feel shy." That left only 5% as true blue not shy. It seems the opposite. You think most people are not shy and the shy are the exception. In fact, recent research shows that shyness is steadily increasing, at least in America where over 50% of people say, "I think of myself as a shy person."

**I: What does it mean - shyness - as the situations in which one can be shy are so broad?**

P: Shyness is a fear of being negatively evaluated by others. That evaluation means they will not like you, respect you, or want to be close to you. So you give them nothing to evaluate. You shut down, you don't talk. You don't perform. You don't make eye contact. Others have no reason to evaluate you negatively, except now you've become a non-person.

**I: Where does "evaluative mindset" come from? Is that a personality trait that's developed in some people over others?**

P: Well, that's what makes shyness an interesting thing to study in that there's a push from nature. About 10% of babies are born what's called 'inhibited.' They have a fragile nervous system. They cry a lot. They're not responsive to people. On the other end of the spectrum, 10% are born bold, that is they're born smiling. They don't cry. You can bounce them around. They're happy babies. And the other 80% are in the middle.

> "Being ridiculed or even seeing other people ridiculed for bad performance. Parents who make their love contingent upon your success - you have to be an 'A' student.."

**I: So that's the natural, biological component?**

P: The genetic part of shyness is probably at most 10%. The rest of it comes from personal and cultural experience. Being ridiculed or even seeing other people ridiculed for bad performance. Parents who make their love contingent upon your success -- you have to be an 'A' student, you have to be a good athlete, you have to be a performer. Schools that encourage excessive competition mean that people have apprehension about failing. And culture plays a big role.

**I: Can you give me an example? I imagine shyness is different even within America, but also outside of it.**

P: In many cultures for example, in Asian cultures, shyness is much more prevalent than it is in America or Western cultures. And again that's for a lot of reasons. Shyness there means something slightly different. It's a general reserve and modesty that's seen as desirable. It's extreme respect for elders and for authority. There's also a sense that if you're

shy and modest, then you're appealing because you're concealing your attributes. On the other hand, when we ask young people in Asian countries, "Do you like being shy?" the answer is overwhelmingly 'no.'

**I: You took shyness a step further than just surveying and wanted to measure it, right?**

P: We set up a clinic at Stanford in 1975 to actually treat shyness, and it's been operating in the community ever since. This is all about social fear. In the extreme sense, it's crippling. Some people never go out, don't have any friends. Don't really have social connections that they value.

**I: What are some steps one**

**can take to embrace their shyness, if they do consider themselves shy?**

P: First, just the information, the awareness that you are not alone helps tremendously. Knowing that shyness is common. Because most people conceal it, you don't notice it. You only notice people who are pathologically shy - who never make eye contact and make themselves non-available. So just knowing, "Hey, I'm not different than most people that are shy" that it's actually the norm now, is helpful. Secondly, what you have to discover is what situations make you shy. For some it's authority. For some it's dealing one-on-one with the opposite sex. For some it's the anonymity of using a telephone. So you have to figure out what makes you shy. And in my book, *The Shy Child*, we have inventory that we developed which gives you a profile of where your shyness comes from. "How do you know you're shy?" "What are the symptoms that you experienced?" We should remember again, it's really different for different people. For some people it's physiological arousal like blushing or stuttering or heart rate increase. For others it's not that at all. It's all cognitive. You're saying to yourself, "I look dumb. I look ugly. I'm going to fail." Still for others, they lack social skills. You don't know how to start a conversation. You don't know how to give a compliment. You don't know how much eye contact you should make. In our shyness clinic and in the shyness book, we have many exercises that get at both of those.

> "Just knowing, "Hey, I'm not different than most people that are shy" that it's actually the norm now, is helpful."

**I: You also started the Hero Imagination Project, which talks about ordinary people having the capability to be heroes. You wrote something that really hit me - that many of us become heroes by being ready at that moment where opportunity arises. You asked, "Will we be ready for that casting call?" and it instilled fear in my heart because I**

**didn't know the answer to if I would be up to the task.**

P: That's the first time someone ever said reading that instilled fear in them. What kind of fears? That's what I have to know.

**I: Well, I'm not a shy person, I'm fairly extroverted. But I've always thought if a moment really presented to me the opportunity to do something that demanded my personal courage (like jump out of a house on fire or run from a bear or something) if I could do it. I wonder if I'd be ready for the casting call.**

> "So an athlete that wins a gold medal at the Olympics, that's not heroic. That's just a testimony to good genes and a lot of practice and maybe good coaching."

P: Okay, that's wonderful because it's that fear of, "Will I be ready when the opportunity comes?" That uncertainty, that when the opportunity comes, that's a barrier for action. You see, the concept of heroes has been overrun and diluted, almost mystical in our culture. Heroes take action on behalf of other people in need or in defense of a moral cause, knowing there's a potential risk or cost and without expectation of a tangible reward. So an athlete that wins a gold medal at the Olympics, that's not heroic. That's just testimony to good genes and a lot of practice and maybe good coaching. For instance, celebrities and role models are not necessarily heroes. The key to heroism is really a social action on behalf of others, in defense of a moral cause. You have to take action.

> "It's by imagining yourself in a variety of heroic situations and making a commitment to the extent that "If I am able, I will take action."

The core argument I'm making in the Hero Imagination Project is simple. It's by imagining yourself in a variety of heroic situations and making a commitment to the extent that "If I am able, I will take action." So it's kind of a psychological preparedness to be a hero in advance of having the opportunity. Now to be a big hero in the classic sense you need evil. You need war. You need disaster. You need corruption that you're going to oppose. And many of us never get that opportunity.

We have research that shows that if you live in the suburbs, chances are slim that you're going to be a hero because not much bad stuff happens in the suburbs. However, if you live in an urban area or in a city, then there's a much greater opportunity for you to be a hero because you have a lot more activity, and often times bad activity happening. In a study of 4,000 Americans we found that one out of five has done something heroic. We found that African Americans are eight times more likely than whites to qualify as having done something heroic. Now it could be that African Americans live in circumstances where there are more challenges and more opportunities for heroism. And they take those more than whites do. It could be that African Americans are more socially focused because having been discriminated against for so long, they are more responsive to the needs of other people. We don't know yet; but the key to our research and our program is that most

> "If you do anything at all, you're different, you're deviant."

heroes are really ordinary people. They're everyday people that we rarely hear about. So what we're trying to do is celebrate the world's everyday heroes. We want to amplify the voices of the world's quiet heroes.

**I: Is it important for us to feel fearless during these acts of heroism? Does one have to access that state of mind and can we train ourselves in that process?**

P: Yes, exactly. It's a process to be developed and it's being aware of your fear. What is it about what you fear? The fear might be that you'll be embarrassed. Most heroes are deviant from the norm because the majority most always do nothing. On the bell curve of humanity, there are a small number of heroes and a small number of villains. Most people, the vast majority, do nothing at all. If you want to be graceful you could call them reluctant heroes who have not yet answered the call but hopefully they will. But the key is, why do so many people do nothing? Well first, parents say 'Don't get involved' 'Mind your own business.' and if you do that you're going to live a long time and you're going to pass on the coward genes because some heroes get killed in battle. When you're sizing up the situation and you look around you say, "Oh my God! This is a dangerous situation" but no one else is doing anything! You're going to do what you think is the right thing, but the fact is that most people don't do the right thing; they're actually thinking it's the wrong thing to do something. It's also not just the fear of being hurt physically, but the fear of being hurt socially - that people will think you're foolish and will see it as an act of bravado. So if you do anything at all, you're different, you're deviant. I think that's one of the fears that keeps people from engaging in heroic action.

**I: I checked out the Hero Imagination website - there's quite a lot of elements to the scope of the project.**

P: Well, we put up the website as information and really for fun. We have big ideas, one of which we'd like people from around the world to sign up to be a "hero in waiting" who says "I'm willing to make a public commitment to think about myself as a hero in waiting. I'm going to prepare myself that if and when the opportunity comes I will take heroic action." Also, you can sign up with one or more friends to be heroes in waiting. To be a hero you need to be prepared. We'll have a hero resource kit that includes, for instance, some first-aid skills because you might need them to perform a heroic task. Or you'll learn some influencing skills because to be a whistle blower you have to persuade the people to join your movement against the fraud.

> "You have to practice being different for a day so that you can withstand the social pressure to get you to not stand up, to not be a deviant."

**I: What other tools of preparation can you use as a "hero in waiting" so to speak?**

P: You have to practice being different for a day so that you can withstand the social pressure to get you to not stand up, not be a deviant. We're going to have a whole set of exercises that help you, while you're waiting for your opportunity, to practice the social habits of heroism everyday. Like "What can I do today to make somebody else that I encounter feel special or help out in some way?" So one of the things we'll do is learn is to give a compliment a day. That's one way you can make other people feel special. Think what you can do to make somebody smile. Start at home with your parents or siblings. How about your teacher? How about your classmates? How about the people you work with?

> "If your focus is on "what can I do to make somebody else feel less shy, what can I do to make somebody else feel respected", then that helps break through the shyness."

**I: So there's also a link between overcoming shyness and becoming a hero in waiting. They have similar trainings.**

P: What hero preparation does is to focus people on the social world. It focuses on the "we" rather than "me." So shy people are excessively focused inward on ego-centrism. It's all about "me." Will people like me? Will I perform well? But if your focus is on what can I do to make somebody else feel less shy, what can I do to make somebody else feel respected, then that helps break through the shyness.

**I: So you really do have to mentally train yourself with shyness and how you feel about yourself as a hero.**

P: You know, Joseph Campbell was a classicist who really raised the whole issue about mythical journey of heroes. Essentially, he talked about the mythical classic male warrior heroes - Achilles, Agamemnon, Odysseus - and they go through a journey of twelve steps and so forth. I'm switching that by looking at everyday people - the single mother

who lives in a bad part of town who works cleaning the subway station. Let's say it's a humiliating job but she sucks it all up because she knows she's going to be able to send her kids to school, and that their lives will be better than hers. That's heroic. That's making a sacrifice on the behalf of others. It doesn't matter if it's your kids or a stranger. We want people to try and respect these quiet acts of courage.

**I: Will someone know when their "hero in waiting" moment becomes real and they really need to respond?**

P: Some of the exercises will focus on what I call situational savvy. How do you size up every situation you're in so that when something happens you realize that something is wrong and that deep down, you're going to have to be the one to react? You can't be foolhardy; you can't jump in a river to save somebody knowing that you're a poor swimmer or that the water is so cold you're unlikely to survive. So we try to build in those kinds of cautions. Fear is a signal that something could be wrong, and sometimes you have to attend to that fear and say, "I'm not qualified to do that. I will have to call 911. I'm not big enough. I'm not fast enough. I don't have the expertise but I will be the first one to call for help." So I think this training will help someone be able to recognize a real moment.

**I: Have you ever had a chance to express heroism in your own life?**

P: When I was in high school I went into my parent's bedroom to get something. It was late at night and I noticed a big apartment house on fire across the street. Fire was shooting out all along the windows. I called the fire department and ran to the house and started ringing all of the bells yelling, "Fire! Fire! Come down the fire escape." By the time the firemen came my adrenaline was flowing. They're running the hose up and I'm in my pajamas and slippers. I get up to the second floor and the firemen are yelling, "What are you doing? Get out of here!" So I got caught up in the whole scene, which wasn't necessarily heroic, it was "here's an emergency and I'm the first person to spot it." Therefore, I felt I had to follow through. There's a point at which calling the fire department, ringing the bells so people would be alert, telling them to come down the fire escape rather than the front stairs -- that was great. But running with the firemen was a bit crazy. It wasn't an act of bravery then, but more the adrenaline!

**I: In your book, *The Time Paradox* you talk about the willingness to be deviant. Do you see your experience with the fire as an example of that?**

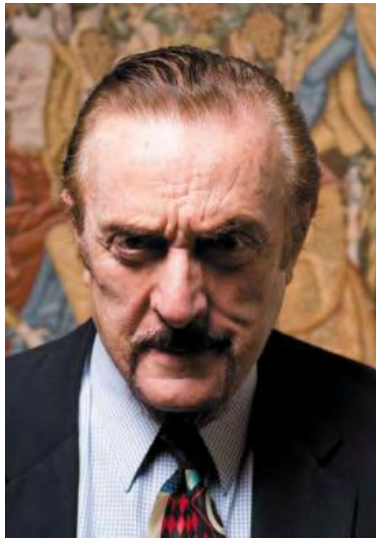
> "If you usually dress up, dress down. If you usually dress down, dress elegantly. You know, put a red dot on your cheek. Sing. Think about your self-image and find some way to violate it for a whole day."

P: I've always been willing to be a deviant; I've always felt that I don't really fit in, so I'm willing to take chances. Even in my teaching, I have an exercise to "Be a deviant for a whole day" in my social psychology class. It means to think about your self-image and violate it. If you usually dress up, dress down. If you usually dress down, dress elegantly. You know, put a red dot on your cheek. Sing. Think about your self-image and find some way to violate it for a whole day.

**I: Isn't the point of psychology for people to be themselves - you know, get to a deeper understanding of who they are?**

P: The whole point is to become aware of the social pressure people put on you to be what they want you to be, your old self. As you become aware, a lot of what you think is your taste in clothes and in music, etc. is really what the people around you want you to look like, act like and think like. And if you can resist that for a day, then when the opportunity comes to be heroic and people say don't get involved, you'll now have the courage to resist. It's really like building moral muscle. And you build a muscle through practice. So you practice in little ways, giving complements, singling people out to do something special for them. We must democratize the notion of heroes - that you don't have to be a special person or a mythical character. Let's move away from the solitary hero, because most heroes are effective within networks and ensembles, and realize that social relationships and being connected is at the heart of who we are and what we do, and it's also at the heart of being the hero in your life.

# PHIL ZIMBARDO



**Phil Zimbardo** is a social psychologist and author. Professor Emeritus at Stanford University, he is currently President of the Hero Imagination Project which promotes ways for people to prepare themselves to seize the moment when given the opportunity to act heroically. Fascinated by how social pressures affect individual psychology and behavior, he has conducted research on such diverse topics as shyness, the dynamics of the prisoner-ward relationship, and exploring how ordinary people can become vulnerable to committing acts of evil. Completing his PhD in psychology at Yale in 1959, he has taught at Yale, New York University, Columbia, and Stanford University. Co-author of a standard undergraduate textbook, Psychology and Life, he is also the host of the 1990 PBS series Discovering Psychology, which remains in wide use in psychology curricula. Famous for the still controversial study "Stanford Prison Experiment," in 1971, Zimbardo is also renowned for such influencial works as *The Time Paradox*, and The Lucifer Effect. Zimbardo is also a past president of the American Psychological Association, and has appeared numerous times on TV, including " The Colbert Report" and "The Daily Show."

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal:
it is the courage to continue that counts.”

- Winston Churchill