

BUILDING BRAVERY

A QUICK GUIDE FOR BRAVE ACTION

Bravery isn't just for heroes.
It's for anyone willing to grow,
speak up, and do the right
thing—even when it's hard.

”

**USE THIS GUIDE TO REFLECT, TAKE ACTION,
AND BUILD YOUR BRAVERY MUSCLE.**



SETTING A BRAVE GOAL

START HERE: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Before you build a brave mindset, take bold action, or tap into support — you need a target worth pursuing. Let's begin by choosing a goal that's both challenging & personally meaningful.

The best goals stretch you and scare you a little — not because you're unprepared, but because they matter. That feeling of discomfort? That's your growth edge.

THE SCIENCE

Research on self-concordant goals shows that people are more likely to follow through — and experience greater well-being — when pursuing goals that align with their personal values, interests, and identity. (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999)

In educational psychology, Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development describes the sweet spot for learning: tasks that are just beyond what you can do alone, but possible with the right support. Similarly, brave goals work best when they sit just beyond your current comfort zone — not so easy that you coast, & not so hard that you freeze.

Bravery lives in this "stretch zone" — where growth happens. It is scary, and it will be hard — but with strong focus, effort and people guiding me and supporting you, you believe it is possible.

CLARIFY YOUR BRAVE GOAL

WHAT'S A GOAL THAT EXCITES YOU AND SCARES YOU — IN A GOOD WAY?

WHY DOES THIS GOAL MATTER TO YOU PERSONALLY? (WHAT'S YOUR WHY?)

WHAT MAKES THIS GOAL FEEL LIKE IT'S IN YOUR PERSONAL STRETCH ZONE?

Bravery isn't about chasing any goal — it's about pursuing the ones that matter most and push you to grow. You just chose yours. Now let's build the mindset, behaviors, and support system to go after it.

”

BRAVERY BELIEFS

BUILD THE MINDSET THAT FUELS ACTION.

Practical Tip: Reframe Stress as a Signal of Readiness

You just selected a goal that's meaningful and challenging — something that matters deeply and stretches your comfort zone. And here's what you should expect next:

Stress. Discomfort. Fear.

That's not a sign you're doing it wrong — it's a sign you're doing something brave.

Bravery isn't the absence of fear. It's the decision to move forward, because it matters, even when you're scared.

When you're pursuing something bold, your body will activate — racing heart, sweaty palms, mental chatter. That's stress. But research by Dr. Alia Crum and others shows that how you interpret that stress has a powerful impact on:

- ▶ Your resilience
- ▶ Your performance
- ▶ Your confidence
- ▶ Even your physiology

PRACTICAL TIP: Choose Your Reframe

The next time you feel your heart racing and your palms sweating before a bold step, pause — and choose what you'll say to yourself.

EXERCISE: CHOOSE ONE OF THESE OR WRITE YOUR OWN:

1 THE EMPOWERED REFRAME

"This is my body preparing me to rise to the occasion. I've got this."

2 THE BRAVE TRUTH-TELLER

"I'm scared — and that means I'm doing something meaningful. Fear is fuel."

3 MARINE CORPS STYLE

"Embrace the suck. This is where strength is forged; where growth happens. Let's go."

4 OR CREATE YOUR OWN:

Reminder: If you feel afraid, good. That means you're alive, growing, and chasing something worth it. Don't wait to feel confident. Confidence comes after action, not before. This is what brave looks like.

”

BOLD MOVES

FEEL THE FEAR, AND DO IT ANYWAY.

PRACTICAL TIP: Break It Down and Anticipate What Might Get in the Way

You've picked a bold and meaningful goal — which means it probably feels a little intimidating. That's normal. When we stare too long at the top of the mountain, it can paralyze us. But when we focus on the next small step, progress feels possible.

The Science: Behavioral research shows that breaking down big goals into manageable steps boosts motivation and momentum. Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory reminds us that confidence is built through mastery experiences — small wins that stack over time. And according to Gabriele Oettingen, when we mentally rehearse how we'll handle obstacles, we're more likely to succeed — even under stress.

EXERCISE: BREAK IT DOWN INTO THE TACTICS - ONE STEP AT A TIME.

FIRST, WHAT'S ONE SMALL STEP YOU CAN TAKE TOWARD YOUR GOAL — SOMETHING THAT FEELS DOABLE?

WHAT'S THE NEXT SMALL STEP?

AND ONE MORE AFTER THAT?

Small steps forward shrink the fear — and build momentum.

BONUS EXERCISE: WHAT MIGHT GET IN THE WAY — AND HOW YOU'LL HANDLE IT

Every brave goal comes with obstacles. Anticipating them now helps you build resilience and self-trust.

CHALLENGE #1: IF THIS HAPPENS, I WILL:

CHALLENGE #2: IF THIS HAPPENS, I WILL:

CHALLENGE #3: IF THIS HAPPENS, I WILL:

Why This Works? When you create a plan for how to handle setbacks in advance, you increase both your resilience (because you're not caught off guard) and your confidence (because you trust yourself to adapt). This is what builds psychological toughness — not wishful thinking, but strategic preparation.

”

BUILD YOUR BRAVE TRIBE

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH STRENGTH.

Even the most successful and self-motivated people lean on others to succeed. In fact, research shows that brave action is more likely when we feel supported — especially by people who believe in us, push us, & encourage us.

Encouragement isn't just about being nice. En-COURAGE-ment literally means to put courage in.

The Science According to Social Baseline Theory (Coan, Schaefer, & Davidson, 2006), simply knowing someone has your back can reduce fear responses in the brain.

PRACTICAL TIP: Surrounding yourself with the right people — those who offer wisdom, accountability, and belief — helps fuel follow-through, especially when things get hard. It's not about having cheerleaders. It's about having a Brave Tribe that helps you rise.

EXERCISE: BUILD YOUR BRAVE TRIBE

Think about your brave goal. Now identify people who can help you succeed — people who either:

- ▶ Have expertise or experience you can learn from
- ▶ Offer emotional support and encouragement
- ▶ Push you with truth and care

NAME #1: HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT YOU:

NAME #2: HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT YOU:

NAME #3: HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT YOU:

Bonus: Reach out this week. Tell them your goal. Ask for their support. Bravery grows faster in community.

BONUS REFLECTION: *What's one thing I learned from this outreach?*

”

FINAL THOUGHTS

Bravery isn't loud or flashy. It's choosing growth over comfort. It's showing up even when you're unsure.



AND IT GETS EASIER WITH PRACTICE.

**YOU'VE ALREADY TAKEN THE FIRST STEP.
KEEP GOING.**



www.jillschulman.com



jill@jillschulman.com

References:

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Coan, J. A., Schaefer, H. S., & Davidson, R. J. (2006). Lending a hand: Social regulation of the neural response to threat. *Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1032-1039.
- Crum, A. J., Salovey, P., & Achor, S. (2013). Rethinking stress: The role of mindsets in determining the stress response. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(4), 716-733.
- Oettingen, G. (2014). *Rethinking Positive Thinking: Inside the New Science of Motivation*. Current.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76(3), 482-497.

