

Fortitude

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According to Philosopher/Priest Thomas Aquinas, fortitude {or courage} is the moral virtue consisting of the right characteristic disposition to withstand and resist fear of the greatest difficulties<sup>1</sup>. This virtue is something I had to use to overcome many difficulties, fears, and obstacles in the last three years. My journey has helped me discover a new person of strength, and help me fight the fight with one's self.

My journey with the self-discovering of fortitude started in 2009, after my mother's death. My mother suffered with damage to her sensory nerves that caused loss of sensations and numbness to her lower extremities, that ultimately, caused a severe bladder infection which took her life at 46-years-old.

After clearing my life savings of \$4,000 to pay for her funeral, I faced eviction from the apartment my mother and I had lived in for over 15 years. With no roof over my head nor money for school, I spiraled into a dark phase of anger and depression. I grew enraged with life because I had no type of support system with any family or friends. I became a stereotypical "damsel in distress" because I felt people were *supposed* to help me because I had no money<sup>2</sup>.ther.

With no way out, I face my fears and entered the temporary shelter for a duration of 180 days. After inquiring, about housing assistance and help towards my education I became empty-handed with false promises. I grew extremely frustrated with all the dead ends I was getting. I grew tired some of staying in the shelter and I missed not only having a house, but a *home*.

I finally hit a point of where I looked inside myself and discovering the fortitude to face life head on and finally become a compass in my life for a better future. I was filled with many fears of failing, not having a mother for the first time in my life, and facing the real world. For

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<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, Thomas; *The Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance*; 2005; Pg. 159

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle; *Nicomachean Ethics*; 2011; Library of Congress; pg. 29

the first time in my life I had to resort to fortitude. I had to pull the fortitude and develop strength to stop being a self-loathing victim and become a productive adult. I needed to take a chance and find my own path.

So I left the shelter before my 180-day stay was finished and took a risk subletting in an apartment with no lease. From there I gained two jobs: one as a certified pharmacy technician and a weekend retail job. From there, I worked, literally, seven days a week. Consequently, having these two jobs led me to be cut off my public assistance benefits.

For the first time in my life, I was surviving without any type of help from public assistance, but with the hard work of two paychecks. I paid my own rent and bought my own groceries with my own money.

My confidence grew and with passing my national pharmacy technician certification, I gained the fortitude to inquire about more vocational training, and took a nursing aide class that I paid for out of my pocket. Also, I took advantage of the extra income and decided to face my tuition bill head on. A \$2,000 goal I was determined to overcome. Working overtime at 12-hour shifts at the weekend job, and my normal weekly job, I slowly, but surely paid off my tuition bill. In August 2013, I enrolled back into school, as a major in Mass Communication and Biology minor.

After passing my nursing aide class, I was encouraged by my teacher to pursue the Licensed Practical Nursing {LPN} program, that is to say, I will pursue to become part of the entering class of 2014. I also saved up for my first apartment and I rented my first studio apartment.

Looking back at the three years, my fortitude helped me not only to work *harder*, but to work *smarter*. I learned that when you pursue your goals, fortitude masks the fears of failures. My virtue has not only become a part of my life, but part of who I am now. Virtues are not only something to live by, but it becomes a part of personality and develops your character as a person and becomes a good habit in life.

According to Aristotle, a person who habitually avoids taking risks to obtain good is as much as a coward as the soldier that runs away in battle for fear of getting hurt. The soldier that risks his life or overcomes his fear of injury for the sake of victory in a good cause has courage<sup>3</sup> Aristotle's analogy, describes how my virtue of fortitude has changed me for the better in the last three years, and helped me discover that I was a coward for years in facing my fears. I was an intimidated coward and used my depression as a form of comfort.

Having fortitude or any other moral virtue in your life can lead to virtuous disposition and help us be more aware of our vices {the opposite of morals}<sup>4</sup>. My vice was fear, and discovering my virtue help me discover that part of me that I didn't know I had. My virtue was a tool I use to not only discover the good, but the bad.

Fortitude helped me not only become a *better* person, but a *productive* person. If you use Aristotle, analogy of learning fortitude {or courage} and learning rock-climbing. We learn to become good rock-climbers through constant practice, not through reasoned arguments, and only when we have become good rock-climbers and appreciate firsthand the joys of rock-climbing,

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<sup>3</sup> Adler, Mortimer; *Aristotle For Everyone: Difficult Thought Made Easy*:1978; pg.104

<sup>4</sup> Spark Notes Editors. "Spark Note on Nicomachean Ethics." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2003. Web. 1 Oct. 2013.< <http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/ethics/section2.rhtml>>

can we properly understand why rock-climbing is a worthwhile activity.<sup>5</sup> This reference describes my experience in the last years. The only way I overcome my fears is through *practice*. The practice of being a productive and self-efficient adult helped me get through the struggle. Living on my own hard earned money, and not on any type of helping hands from another, whether it is through a friend or family or through public assistance, helps me appreciate the achievements I made happen for myself.

The last three years, my fortitude helped me become a person of force. I discovered more strong points about myself to move forward in life and achieve new goals and utilize my skills. My virtue destroyed my excessive of fears of failing, the fear of being alone and on my own, moving on with life after death, and my deficiencies of not having any support systems, or a real idea of what was going to happen next.<sup>6</sup> Now, I am ready to take risks, chances, and challenges head on in my life and I have the most powerful tool to face them: my fortitude.

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<sup>5</sup> SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on Nicomachean Ethics." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2003. Web. 1 Oct. 2013.< <http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/ethics/section2.rhtml>>

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle; *Nicomachean Ethics*;2011;Library of Congress; pg.29