

Keeping a Stiff Upper Lip

Category: Bravery

written by R. Lynn Barnett | February 3, 2025

Medicine presents many opportunities for bravery. Years ago, I was at a medical imaging facility, where a child was getting a CAT scan. The mom said to her offspring, "Be brave." Sometimes, bravery is going into a burning building to save a kid, and sometimes bravery is a kid going into a small tunnel of a CAT scanner.

Sometimes, bravery is learning to drive, and sometimes, bravery is taking the keys away from an Alzheimer's-ridden mom. Even if the ensuing criticism of that action is driving you crazy.

Sometimes bravery is standing up for yourself, even if you're sitting down. Like when the wrong side of your mouth is being numbed for dental work. Even if your gum is numb, speak up!

Sometimes bravery is speaking up for someone, and sometimes bravery means saying nothing, like when a petty comment is thrown your way. Silence can be the loudest voice of all.

I was recently diagnosed with a minor skin cancer: basal cell, on my upper lip. As the doc was preparing to do this out-patient procedure, he reassuringly said, "You're so brave." I told him I'd "keep a stiff upper lip." In more ways than one!

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