

Finding Moral Courage

Category: Guts

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | April 2, 2026

It began in junior high when a group of neighborhood girls decided they were better than the rest of us. They wrote a song about their looks and personalities; they sang this every morning on the bus to school and every afternoon on the return trip home. These girls made me feel worthless and invisible.

I wish I had had the guts to stand up on the bus and silence them by telling them the harm they were causing. But I didn't have that moral courage.

It continued in high school when the boys declared they would only date one of these popular girls. To even converse with someone outside the "in" group would lower their macho image.

I wish I had had the guts to call a boy and ask him to a movie or invite him for a cherry Coke and fries after school. But I didn't have that moral courage.

It emerged at the twenty-fifth high school reunion. I still don't know why I went, but I did realize once there that time had not cured the elitism of this group of women. They still separated themselves from the few other outsiders who attended, showing no interest in our post-high school lives.

I wish I had had the guts to confront them, to alert them to the emotional scars they had caused. But I didn't have that moral courage.

Then, shortly after my 78th birthday, one of the women started a text link to discuss personal and social issues. For some strange reason, my text became a part of that link. In an "aha" moment, I realized I had the texts of the women who had tainted my adolescence and life; I had the opportunity to communicate my feelings to them. And, for the first time in my life, I had the guts to do so.

Much to my surprise, my texts were met with positive responses of apology. The once mean girls had matured into caring women who felt remorse for their youthful indiscretions. Their words did not erase years of self-image damage, but they did make me feel like I finally had the guts to face the villains of my past.

My moral courage gives me pride in the woman I have become. I will never see myself as pretty or popular, but I do accept that I have value; I matter.

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