

Whatever it is, please just do it

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Most people think they fail because they lack talent. In reality, many people stop acting because they are afraid of judgment, criticism, or being exposed as not good enough.

In this video, I discuss the powerful argument made in the book *Art & Fear* by David Bayles and Ted Orland. The book suggests that the biggest barrier to success is not ability; it is fear.

That matters politically. If people who care about justice, equality and a politics of care stay silent, then the voices that dominate debate will be those who do not care about people at all.

Confidence does not come before action. It comes after action. The only way change happens is when people act despite uncertainty.

So the question is simple: what would happen if more of us spoke up?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH8nLBSvHd4?si=TZqQ1JSmzdA-Rd4E>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=ip899-1a6367d-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Most people think they fail because they lack talent. That includes people who want to succeed in the political sphere. They stop doing what they think is the right thing because they're afraid. And that is the core argument of a book I looked at recently called *Art & Fear*. It's written by two people called David Bayles and Ted Orland. It's been around for a long time. I saw it in a review by somebody called Mary Spender, whose music I follow on YouTube, and it sounded really interesting, so I gave it a look.

And the book is more radical than it sounds because what it says is that we need to overcome our fear and just keep going. And given that we need as many people as possible to talk about a politics of care and politics for people, I think that's something we need to talk about.

The myth is that we do not succeed in anything unless we are brilliant, original, or exceptional. So when we feel doubt, we assume we are not good enough. But the book says that the assumption that we must be brilliant, original, or exceptional is just wrong. That's not the way the world is. The real barrier to success is psychological and not technical.

We live in fear of judgment.

We live in fear of being told we're mediocre.

We live in fear of exposure as a fraud because we actually don't know what we're talking about.

We live in fear that our work will not measure up to our own standards.

And because of that fear, people stop producing and that matters to me because people who stop producing in the area of political economy, and who stop producing when they want to talk about the politics of care, matter because it's one less person to spread the message that I think the world needs to hear.

And this is the issue that we need to address: beginners often know what they want to do. They know what they think a good product, a good argument, or whatever else it might be, looks like, but they fear that their skills lag behind their vision. As a result, they have what is called a development gap, and that feels like failure. They can't deliver the outcome they want, but that isn't a big problem in reality. The problem is that you think you are a failure, not that you are a failure.

The problem is that you just need to keep at whatever you want to do so that you develop into it, and let's look at an example. This is one that came from the book.

The authors described a ceramics class. One group was graded on the quantity of work that they produced. The other group was graded on the quality of work that they produced. The bizarre thing is that the highest quality work did in fact come from the group that was told to make as many pieces as possible. Why? Because their

improvement came from repetition and not perfectionism, and perfectionism was the enemy of the good when it came to the group who were trying to focus on quality. They couldn't focus on quality because they couldn't get themselves to start, because they thought they had to produce something that was perfect. Well, that's the issue that I'm talking about.

And this isn't just about art, of course. It's about any meaningful work, anywhere.

You do not become capable by waiting to feel certain that you're going to do something good. You become capable by doing something, and I mean anything.

In my case, writing a blog, sitting in front of this video camera, doing whatever it is that I'm up to. I didn't get here by being good at those things; I became good at those things by doing them. 24,000 blog posts and nearly 1,000 videos, I think it is now. The point is, it takes practice, and if you want to gauge our progress, just go back and look at some of our early videos. They're not good. We had to make 100 bad ones before we even got to being mediocre, and that's a generally understood ratio on YouTube.

So confidence follows action, in other words. We just kept going, and because we did, we developed the confidence to do more. But confidence does not precede action. Confidence follows action, and this matters way beyond creativity.

We face uncertainty in politics, for example, and in economics, and in social change. If we wait until we are completely sure, then let's be blunt about it; nothing will happen. Progress is only made by people who act despite their doubts.

So here's the conclusion: the world will not wait to change until you are ready, because you are never going to be ready.

The world will not change because you are waiting to be fearless, because you're never going to feel fearless. I feel fear quite often.

It will only change if you act.

In other words, please write that piece that you've been thinking about.

Make the argument that you've been developing in your head.

Start the project that you want to get going.

Join the radio phone in. Just focus on that little bit that you know.

Sign up to whatever it is that you think might help to achieve the change in the world that you want.

The point is, the world won't change without you taking action, so please take it now.

Do whatever you think is necessary to create a politics of care, a politics that cares for people, and an economics that delivers hope.

Poll

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