

Courage in the Small Things By Alena Gerst, LMSW, RYT

In 1998, I was just out of college living in Flagstaff, AZ and planning a move to New York City to begin my career in musical theater. I was delighted to learn from my primary doctor that his daughter just happened to be a Tony award-winning musical theater diva superstar living in the Big Apple!

[Judy Kaye](#) was co-starring on Broadway at that time and he offered to introduce us. So shortly after I arrived, my parents came to visit and we went to see Judy Kaye in *Ragtime* together, my first Broadway show.

I was so moved that I cried during the overture before the show even started (actually I still do that sometimes).

After the show, we were instructed to wait outside the backstage door for the one and only Judy Kaye. She came out the door and we introduced ourselves excitedly.

I had fantasies of her joining us for a late dinner or coffee, and telling me all about her trajectory in the business, offering advice and guidance.

But instead she said we could walk her to her car.

On the way, I told her I had just booked my first national tour, a children's production of Winnie the Pooh (I played Piglet), and she told me about her first tour which was also a children's show (she played an elephant). And all too soon, we were standing in front of the parking garage.

I'm sure Judy Kaye has no memory of this little walk to her car 15 years ago. But I'll never forget it.

We have all been impacted by something said or done that seemed of little or no consequence to someone else. And the same holds true in caring for our bodies. We notice when people have lost a great deal of weight, or chopped off their hair, or we take special notice in a yoga class or the gym when we achieve a significant *asana* (posture) or reach a new fitness milestone.

Peter Sterios, director of Yoga Centre in San Luis Obispo, California, spoke to this idea in an article about the many faces of courage.

"The most visible face of courage," Sterios writes, "and the one that we tend to value most, is the kind found in front-page headlines or on the big screen." He goes on to talk about survivors, heroes, warriors.

But truly it's in the every day small moments, which require faith, trust, and awareness, which shape our lives and make up the small victories.

"We start with little things," says Sterios, "and **with constant practice, we build our stamina, strength, and courage.**"

And referring to the practice of Yoga (but applicable to just about anything), Sterios continues, "In the midst of this lie the seeds for transformation-opportunities to break ingrained patterns of reaction, physical and emotional."

The Broader Perspective

My little story about walking a superstar to her car resonates with this idea that we approach our bodies, and each other, with humility. We never truly know the impact we have on others' and our own health and well-being with each bite, step, stretch, thought, word, or deed.

But our bodies, and often those around us, notice everything.

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