

Being Brave Doesn't Mean You're Fearless

Intro: Play Disney Pixar's short film *Piper*.

Welcome: How many of you can relate to Piper? (Raised hands, hopefully!)

Hello, I'm Tasha Lutfi and I'm delighted to talk to you today about being brave when life hits you with unexpected waves. This Pixar short film is one of my favorites because we've *all* been in Piper's predicament. Piper's story is a brilliant brief study on how to not only overcome one's fear but embrace it and *thrive*.

Every single one of us has faced moments of uncertainty. We've all experienced those familiar pangs of fear when something comes up in our lives – like that first wave that washed over Piper, that shakes us to our core. These are defining moments in our lives typically don't feel super awesome, but it *is* these moments that often present us with the biggest opportunities to grow.

Your Personal Moment: I'm a Principal Design Manager for Microsoft Mobile Experiences and I lead Women in Design. I'm passionate about what I do because I love to create amazing experiences for others. And I can assure you that I've experienced many Piper moments throughout the span of my career. In fact, the one I want to share with you today happened just a few months ago.

Now, you all can see me here on stage speaking to you today. It may not look like it, but before I started talking? I was mentally talking myself through a mini freak out as I envisioned everything that could go wrong with this speech. I have a love for public speaking and I'm truly passionate about sharing my unique voice and experiences as a woman of color in the design field. I've had numerous opportunities to speak to large audiences. I always prepare, pray, breathe through my jitters and the fear of totally sucking once I get in front of an audience.

Recently, I was asked to present at Blend – a big conference for top Microsoft executives. Naturally, I was thrilled and terrified. What if I messed up my speech? What if I totally screwed up this unexpected, momentous moment. I promise you I imagined at least a *million* little tragic scenarios that could take place once I took the stage. Little did I know I would also be asked to *sing and dance!*

News flash! I'm **not** a singer. I was positively terrified when this new action item was added to my list of tasks for this conference. I assumed we'd lip sync. I thought - "Hey, I can fake the singing and just concentrate on my dance steps for the faux music performance."

Nope! We were going to sing it live and to a Beyoncé song no less!

Let me tell you, I love Beyonce, but that song still haunts my dreams! Now, I'm not a quitter. I relentlessly practiced my speech, the song, and the dance routine. Yes, it was *a lot* to do in a

short span of time. Still, I gave it my all. I was feeling pretty good about my musical contribution to our group – I was singing with two other male associates – until, they pulled me aside and asked me if I could hear the melody. Now, if you don't know what that means – it's a singer's way of telling you that you are essentially tone deaf. (Laughter, hopefully!)

Yeah, at this moment, I wondered how I could get through any of what I'd been asked to do. I could've backed out of the musical number, but I decided I wasn't going to let my insecurities or less than stellar singing abilities (or so *they* said) keep me from taking part in an amazing experience.

I decided to be brave, but let's be clear: **Being Brave Doesn't Mean You're Fearless.**

Was I scared? Absolutely! I got up in front of a **huge** crowd in my gold stiletto boots and went for it. I was determined to channel those feelings of insecurity and uncertainty into action. I *did* get through that song and my speech. It was something! A moment I will never forget. I dare say my group, either! Of course, I still think about what I could've changed or done better, but that's what we do as people, especially creative ones.

Bringing It All Home: Designers, you are wired to see the tiniest detail, to scrutinize the smallest of lines, to question the look, feel, hue, font – you get the point – of *everything!* It's a gift and a skill that you will continue to hone as your build upon your career.

If you're like me, you haven't gotten here alone. Someone has encouraged you along the way. Often, it's a family member, teacher or friend that pushes us to step outside of ourselves – to reach beyond what we know. I love the little red crab that helped Piper overcome crippling fear. I think it's important to recognize who has been that person for you today. No doubt, you will encounter other people happy to encourage and inspire you along the way. I challenge you all to be a little red crab to someone else who'll come along your path too.

Never doubt your impact on those around you! Someone will need to hear your words of encouragement. Know that you will inspire others through your creativity and your kindness. I look out over all of you today and I'm inspired by the younger generation. I hope I've inspired you to be brave in your career and your life. It's okay to be scared when faced with new challenges. Just don't let your insecurities keep you from hunkering down like Piper and embracing the waves.

Closing: Living your best life will require you to be bold. You may suck in a little water. You may get your feathers a little ruffled. Sometimes you might feel you are completely out of your depth. Life has a way of testing us, but I want you to remember to keep an eye out for those little red crabs doing what you're afraid to do. Graduates, watch, learn, be bold and you *will* grow!

And Remember: **Being Brave Doesn't Mean You're Fearless.**

Being brave means, you'll challenge yourself to be bold when you'd rather bury your head in the sand. You'll dig your feet in instead, open your eyes, embrace the moment and ride those waves.

I challenge each one of you here today to be like Piper **and** the little red crab as you move forward. I truly believe that's the key to a joyful, successful, *beautiful* life! Congratulations to you all!

(Applause!)