

Rhino Skin

Description

“I was a soft kid. I was sensitive, I would cry easily and I was afraid to fist fight. My mother used to tell me this thing. She’d say, ‘son, sometimes you have to be a lion, so you can be the lamb you really are’.”

— Dave Chappell

This quote hits me deep in my soul. I, too, am a lamb. Always have been. A quick-to-tears, sensitive kid. The infamous quote I remember from my childhood was my dad telling me (almost on the daily), “you’d better tough up! You gotta have thick skin.” At the time, it probably made me cry more—haha. But now I can look back with gratitude because I realize that Dad knew this world would eat me alive if I couldn’t figure out how to be a lion at times. And I have certainly had a good deal of experiential learning. (Ask me about the time my boss called me into her office to let me know that I “dress like a janitor”. Rude.)

Typically, though, I channel not the lion, but the elusive and endangered Rhinoceros. My spirit animal. The rhino pictured below is my little guy who sits on the desk in my office every day and reminds me that sometimes I need to put on my tough exterior in order to protect my sensitive and caring heart. The rhino’s skin is so thick it becomes like an armor, protecting the rhino’s internal organs to prevent serious injury from predator attack. When I “put on my rhino skin”, I am more capable of maintaining poise and confidence in the midst of (inevitable) difficult confrontation or uncomfortable conversation, receiving or giving developmental feedback, and other similar situations during which perhaps my natural tendency would be to crawl to a corner and cry until I drown in my own tears. ð???



This little guy sitting my desk every day reminds me of my dad, the toughest guy I know. This rhino a symbol of one of the many lessons Dad taught me and how helpful it has been throughout my life. I'll never be as tough as my dad, but I know I'm tougher because of him. And my life is fuller because of my ability to approach the tough stuff in life with my rhino skin on. Thanks, Dad!

Wearing my rhino skin means that blows (to my ego) do not pierce the skin and damage internal organs (break my heart or deflate my spirits); I don't allow myself to internalize things and cause any unnecessary confidence set-backs, anxiety, pain, disappointment, constant rumination, self-doubt, self-criticism, etc. etc. etc. My rhino skin also helps me live my core value of integrity. When I feel scared to speak out as the unpopular opinion though I believe it's right; when I am nervous to initiate a conversation that I know will help someone grow, but may be painful for them to hear; These are the times I need to put on my rhino skin, and do the thing that I know will help me uphold my value of integrity.

As I see things, I have been able to continue living my life as a lamb, for the most part. I've just figured out ways to "tough up" in order to grow and mature in countless aspects of my life. Putting on my rhino skin to have an open and honest conversation, for example, is a strength that will enhance all of my relationships, professional and personal. It takes practice and intentionality. Reach out if you want some guidance on when and how to "put on your rhino skin". I would love to guide you along your journey.

Category

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Tags

1. challenge
2. crucial conversations
3. difficult
4. feedback
5. leadership
6. positive conflict

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