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Bravery in Research

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We need more brave scientists. Scientists and researchers are desperately needed who are not afraid to dip their feet – or even swim – in the lake of unknown murky waters in science. If the water was crystalline and clear when we dove in, it would not be research.

Academia's "ivory tower" needs to crumble and be rebuilt. The present research and academic system has historically rarely honored those brave pioneers who dive into turbid waters. Instead, those divers in the past have had to live in fear of being ostracized from their academic profession, or at the very least, worry about being passed over for promotion and never achieve tenure. "Publish or perish" is often the rule in academia, but it is far too common that the research published is safe and established, rather than innovative and discovery oriented. A change is on the horizon, however. A much-needed shift is occurring now, a rumbling of scientists hungry to break out of the mold and into ground-breaking research.

Smaller academic journals have emerged in recent years to provide new opportunities which brings with it both positives and negatives. It does, however, allow pioneers in research to pick from a larger pool of periodicals in which to publish. This is an important step in discovery science.

As researchers, it is important to check in with ourselves and remember the factors that excited us about research when we first started out in our careers. What new fields of study piqued our interest? What were we dying to discover, an area into which no one had ever really ventured or explored?

Numerous exciting alternative and integrative fields are beginning to be researched, including meditation, yoga, sound healing, other natural therapies, and the human biofield. Complementary and alternative medicine tends to attract those with open minds and hearts, including researchers. While this may be considered a blessing and a curse, those in this field have a leaning towards exploring the unknown. We are already inclined toward exploration; sometimes we may just need a reminder nudge to jump in and be brave with our research.

Many researchers have deeply ambiguous feelings regarding publishing in peer-reviewed journals. There are definitely challenges – the cost, the peer-review process, the time involved, and so on. However, the entire process seems worth it in the end when we view our exciting new results published or read about the latest eye-opening breakthrough.

Humankind continues to be on the precipice of major discoveries. The past 100 years have been unprecedented in health advances, including antibiotics, the Polio vaccine, and the MRI machine. Major technological discoveries in the past century include computers, cell phones, and venturing into space. Technological advances seem to occur at an exponential rate in recent years. Of course, it is important to remember to utilize our discoveries in a responsible manner, bearing in mind the impact on humans, animals, and the planet itself.

It is far too easy to slip back into researching "safe" topics and fields of study. Instead, though, researchers need to be pioneers. I

invite you to dive into that murky lake, now knowing what creature one may bump up against.

After all, it's important to ask ourselves if we are merely on this planet to take up space and fill a human body for 80 or 90 years or have we decided to be here so that we can make some small – or large – difference to help humankind? Are we only here to exist and survive a lifetime, or at the end of our lives, can we be grateful that we have made a discovery or improvement while we were here?

It is not an easy path; I am the first to admit this. At times, it takes determination, perseverance – and some might call it moxie – which is not for everyone. My hope, though, is that there are enough of us that are willing to metaphorically throw the mask and suit aside and dive into those opaque scientific waters of the unknown. Even when we leap out of the water shivering, let us be more courageous than we thought we could be, and dive right back into opalescence to explore the questions of the universe.

We have only touched the tip of the scientific iceberg. In the 1500's, most people "knew" the earth was flat. A few brave souls,

though (such as Copernicus, Galileo, and others), have ventured beyond the status quo. These pioneers have proposed ideas and theories that ruffled more than a few feathers of the status quo, so to speak. Historically, brave pioneers have ventured in ships, in rocket ships, and in metaphorical rocket ships that explore "inner space". It is not an easy path; however, it may be one of the most rewarding.

Pioneers come in many shapes and sizes, with just as many new and innovative fields to explore, including the pioneering areas of alternative forms of healing and the examination of the human biofield. Let us all be brave explorers sailing these uncharted waters and deep dive into new research when called to do so.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.