

Dance with me!

by J.A. Gamache

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The iron door slammed behind me. Its noise echoed on high concrete walls. Two huge security guards escorted me down a loong corridor!

Mister contest chair, Ladies and Gentlemen. I was in prison... by invitation... working as a Disc Jockey. My job was to make the inmates dance! That day, I would have to deal with angry, abusive, aggressive people... and those were just the security guards!

As I set up my music equipment in the gymnasium, a security guard started placing orange traffic cones aaalll around me.

I said, "What are those for?"

"They're for your protection." We tell the prisoners not to cross the line.

I was among killers, maniacs, psychopaths! But hey! I had a line of plastic cones for protection!... which was great because the first request I got from an inmate was a song entitled: I shot the sheriff!!!

When the music started no one danced. When this happens, to bring life to the party I just step onto the dance floor ... but the moment I crossed the line cones, inmates started to smile. A room full of Dirty Harry's leered at me with eyes saying: "Go ahead, make my day." So I stepped back.

Can you see the irony? Among prisoners, I was the only FREE man delighted to stay behind bars... too afraid to leave an illusion of safety which moments ago seemed so absurd, a line of cones.

Don't you recognize this line Ladies and Gentlemen? It's inside all of us. It's the frontier that separates mediocrity from greatness. Greatness begins at the line of fear. When we know we should do something scary we ask ourselves questions like, What if it doesn't work? What if they just laugh at me? What if...?

We often wonder what is the price of taking action. What about the cost of standing still? Have you ever asked yourself: "What if I knew I didn't give my best? What if I knew I took the coward's way out?" What if...

I had stood at this very line many times before. And each time I stayed on this side I felt mediocre. I had to admit that throughout my life the person who disappointed me the most... was me... until I learned to dance.

Today when I come upon a line of fear I put my hands in the air like I don't care. I do this in memory of the day I took my first baby step into greatness.

It was a year later. This time I was at a reception hall entertaining a group of hearing impaired people. My job as a D.J. was to bring music to a roomful of people...who could not hear. No matter what songs I played, no matter how LOUDLY I played them; nobody danced! Once again there was a barrier between us. Once again I was the outsider and once again I was afraid... but this time I decided to cross that line of fear anyway. I climbed on a speaker and yelled. (Note: J.A. waved his arms in the air.) Well, that's how you yell in sign language!

Someone waved back at me, then another and another...

It worked! We all danced together. At last, we all understood each other. No word was spoken yet no one was silent anymore for in our hearts we could all hear the joy roaring like a thousand voices. I connected to that feeling. Some

words erupted from my soul. I couldn't hold them anymore. I yelled, "I love you all" and they all signed back. "We love you too"

For the first time, I broke free. I felt free

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fear is not a barrier. It's a point of departure. Isn't it time for you to step into your greatness? Think of all you are missing out in your life right now because you are standing still, imprisoned, betraying your true self

For all those times you could have danced but chose to stop ... you could have dared but chose to step back... you could have dreamed and followed your destiny but chose to turn away... it's now time for you to dance.

Make my day... Can you hear me? (Note: J.A. waved his arms in the air) Dance with me!

Greatness begins right now and here...at the line of fear.

Mister contest chair

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About J.A. Gamache

A bachelor in business administration, J.A. Gamache is a bilingual (French and English) professional speaker from Montreal, Canada.

In 2003, He was the president of the Montreal's Chapter of the Canadian Association of Public Speakers (CAPS).

A proud Toastmasters' member since 1993, J.A. Gamache is the only Quebecer to ever win a podium (3rd place in the 2001) at Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking and was a finalist in that same contest in 2005 and 2007. Over 35 000 contestants participate in this prestigious event every year.

His free enewsletter "Public Speaking with J.A." is read in more than 50 countries around the world by over 3000 readers.

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J.A. Gamache, 2001 3rd place Champion of
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