

October 2011 – My New Favourite Word

I tended to think of language as relatively fixed, in terms of words at least. Don't we have enough words to already express ourselves well? Apparently not. According to Webster, over 150 new English words have been added to their on-line dictionary in 2011 alone.

New words get tracked over time and if they sustain for years and their meanings stabilize then the word gets added to the dictionary.

At first I thought these new words would all originate from the social networking universe (like tweet and social media). It seems that the new words come from pop culture (cougar, boomerang child and bromance) and sports (parkour and duathlon) as well. Admittedly it is much easier to update an on-line dictionary than the old paper volumes.

My new favourite word that has not been added to the dictionary is scave. It comes from the popular fiction book ROOM by Emma Donoghue. It is a word sandwich used by the mother in the story talking to her 5 year old son, Jack, about being scared in a situation and still needing to be brave.

SCAVE = Scared + Brave.

There are many times in life we need to be scave. Feel the emotion of being scared and act bravely anyway. Fear is a primal emotion that has helped species continue to exist; it warns us of danger and risk. It is very useful in potential life, death and injury situations. And sometimes we create fear to threats that don't exist and if we aren't brave we may not act and hence miss out on something amazing.

I was reminded of this on a recent flight to Switzerland for work. I am an uncomfortable flier. I flew with no fear for many years. I know it is the safest form of transport available. I know the safety records for North American and Western Europe flights are essentially spotless. I know I have flown many, many times before and survived if not thrived. And I am still nervous as I have experienced an emergency landing with a plane engine on fire which started my fear. If I had let my fear of flying stop me my life would not be what it is today. I would not have moved to Europe, my work opportunities would be much different; I would not have travelled within Europe, North American and Asia. I would not have seen sights, had adventures and met friends that are dear to me.

Many of the great things that have happened to me in my life have been the result of facing something I was afraid of, the living example of scave. Now this doesn't mean being reckless and foolhardy. It means assessing the risk, understanding the fear and acting anyway with common sense safe guards. It's ok to jump out of a plane, as long as you have a properly packed parachute, some support and training.

What accomplishment or experience is possible for you if you lived scave?

Live your potential

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