



The Opposite of Fear is Love is from Chapter 13 of Steven Pressfield's [The Warrior Ethos](#) published by Black Irish Books.

The greatest counterpoise to fear, the ancients believed, is love—the love of the individual warrior for his brothers in arms. At Thermopylae on the final morning, when the last surviving Spartans knew they were all going to die, they turned to one of their leaders, the platoon commander Dienekes, and asked him what thoughts they should hold in their minds in this final hour to keep their courage strong. Dienekes instructed his comrades to fight not in the name of such lofty concepts as patriotism, honor, duty or glory. Don't even fight, he said, to protect your family or your home.

Fight for this alone: the man who stands at your shoulder. He is everything, and everything is contained within him.

The soldier's prayer today on the eve of battle remains not "Lord, spare me," but "Lord, let me not prove unworthy of my brothers."

Civilians wonder at the passion displayed by wounded soldiers to get back to their units, to return to the fight. But soldiers understand. It is no marvel to them that men who have lost arms and legs still consider themselves fit for battle, so powerful is the passion to return to their brothers—and not to let them down.

All warrior cultures train their youths to feel this love. They make the young men on the passage to warriorhood dress alike, eat and sleep alike, speak alike, wear their hair alike, suffer alike and achieve victory alike.

Ordeals of initiation are undergone not as individuals but as teams, as units.

Courage is inseparable from love and leads to what may arguably be the noblest of all warrior virtues: selflessness.

[Steven Pressfield](#) is the author of [Gates of Fire](#), [Tides of War](#), [The Afghan Campaign](#) and [Killing Rommel](#), among others. His latest release is [The Knowledge](#). He is a former Marine. In 2003, he was made an honorary citizen of Sparta in Greece.

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