

Courage for TRHS 4-4-22

As we focus on the character trait of courage, I find my mind returning to the Cowardly Lion from the Wizard of Oz. The Lion's sincerest wish was to find courage, just as the Scarecrow wanted a brain, the Tin Man wanted a heart, and Dorothy wanted a home. These four wishes—for a sound mind, a loving heart, a comforting home, and the courage to move forward—could be the recipe for a fulfilling life. So how can we help teach children to be courageous?

A good start for younger children might be this entertaining 4-minute video:

[Have Courage and Be Fearless](#)

As Vivian explains, "We're all afraid of something. Like I'm afraid of spiders, monsters, and zombies. . . The question is: what are we going to do about it?"

Everyone is afraid of something, and that's okay. No one has the ability to prevent themselves from feeling fear. Fear alerts us to possible danger, and it serves a protective function. Our feelings, however, don't have to dictate actions. We always have a choice about how to respond to our feelings. The fight/flight/or freeze response may be unavoidable, but that feeling will pass. When I was on a boat that capsized, fear caused me to freeze. My husband yelled, "Emily: SWIM!" and I snapped out of my frozen state. I made the choice to swim.

Courage shows up when we choose to do something difficult that scares us. Bravery requires people of all ages to stand up against injustice. For most children, courage begins when they stand up for themselves. Courage requires us to be assertive, and assertiveness is a teachable skill. Sometimes it can be helpful to give children a script to use when they encounter difficult situations. One Grass Valley kindergarten teacher has posters in her room that say:

"I feel _____ when you _____. Will you please stop?"

When her students are frustrated with each other, the teacher coaches them to use this simple prompt. For example:

"I feel sad when you call me a chicken nugget. Will you please stop?"

This same prompt can be used to advocate for others as well:

“I feel scared when you hiss at the teacher. Will you please stop?”

“I feel angry when you’re mean to Sophie. Will you please stop?”

Standing up for other people takes courage. It’s often easier to be a silent bystander than it is to intervene. Bravery appears when someone makes the choice to do the scary thing, because they believe it is the right thing to do.

If you want to instill courage in your children:

- praise them when they are assertive, especially when they are **politely** assertive
- **model** courage (you know your kids are watching you all the time)
- help your kids differentiate between **feeling** scared and **behaving** in a fearful way
- use books, movies, and real-life situations to **teach** the importance of courage

The most cowardly lion in the land of Oz eventually earned the medal of courage. Bravery can bloom.