



Cultivating Virtue in Leadership

COURAGE

in Educational Leadership





Overview



- What is it?
- Why do you want it?
- How do I get it?
- How do I help others get it?
- Resources



What does it mean to be courageous?



- **Courage makes the difference.** The main difference between those who courageously act and those who stay stuck amounts to how we view fear. Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is being afraid and working through the discomfort. Courage means you allow challenge and adversity to be a catalyst to help you grow strong enough to [face whatever life throws at you](#).
- **Courage is unique to each of us.** Courage is highly individual to each person. So is suffering. Don't compare your pain and fear to the experiences of others. What is scary to one person may be exhilarating to the next. We see things differently and we experience different types of courage. Neither is better or worse than any other. I know people who are fearless when it comes to travel or sports, but they refuse to fall in love because they may get hurt. There is no one size fits all when it comes to courage.
- **There are many different ways to practice courage.** To care for a disabled family member requires you to be courageous to face an unending series of daily challenges. To be a successful business owner, you must be bold and have courage to [take calculated risks](#). To be a loving friend, parent or spouse, you must be courageous to forgive.
- <https://www.success.com/blog/what-courageous-people-have-figured-out>





Definition



Courage: daring to take risks and trying out new approaches to old problems (Greenleaf, 1991). According to Greenleaf (1991) courage is an important characteristic that distinguishes the servant leader from other leaders. Within the organizational context, **courage is about challenging conventional models** of working behaviors (Hernandez, 2008); it is essential for **innovation and creativity**. Courage includes a willingness to not only **hear the truth**, however unpleasant it might be, but also systematically and routinely **seeking out the truth**; having the courage to **admit one's mistakes and a willingness to learn and change**. It takes courage to **honestly assess** one's situation, to **rely on others**, and lead (Templeton, 2011, Kindle Locations 3844-4849).





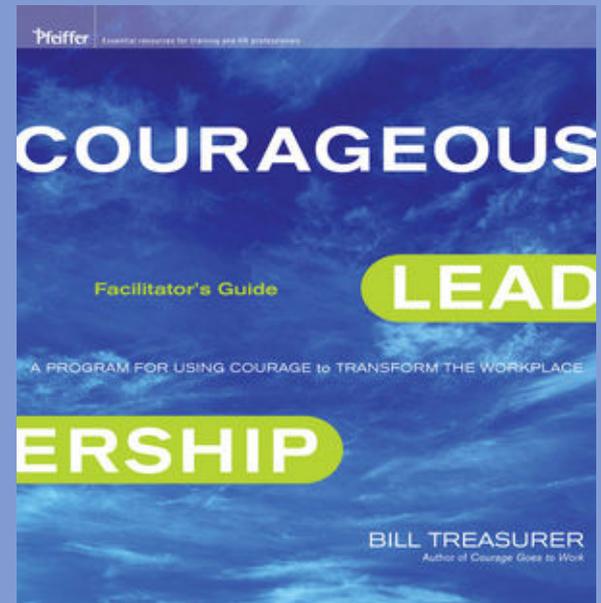
Courage in Leadership



In the Courageous Leadership program, author Bill Treasurer defines courage in this way, "Courage is acting on what is right, despite being afraid or uncomfortable, when facing situations involving pain, risk, uncertainty or intimidation."

Treasurer goes on to name three different types of courage

- **try** courage (the courage of action),
- **trust** courage (releasing control, following others and assuming good intentions), and
- **tell** courage (courage of voice, telling the truth in spite of the difficulty).





How do try courage, trust courage and tell courage look in the school?



“Try” Courage in schools:

- *After consultation with a faculty committee, the principal chose to put a thirty minute Advisory program into the daily schedule for the next school year despite the disapproval of the Superintendent.*

“Trust” Courage in school:

- *The new high school principal saw that the counselors were considered to be little more than course schedulers by the faculty. In order to give that department an opportunity to demonstrate their competence and ability to handle responsibility, the principal put the counselors in charge of administering the ACT to students.*

“Tell” Courage in school

- *The assistant principal noticed that a pattern of discipline referrals had developed from some of the middle school teachers. Only African American males received written discipline referrals from one teacher for a year. Other students received multiple discipline referrals from only one teacher on a team of four teachers. The assistant principal rendered the names of students and teachers anonymous and presented the data disparity to the faculty in a meeting and opened a discussion about culturally responsive discipline, classroom management, team norms and consistency with the aim of setting new goals and accountability mechanisms in a non-threatening, objective way.*





Another view of courage in school:



In *Courageous Headship*, Michael Thompson puts it another way:
What Kind of Courage Do School Leaders Need?

- Protective Courage – The courage of the mother (investigating wrong-doers, standing up to bullies –parents, board members, community members)
- Long Distance Courage – The courage of the mountaineer (long term goals, initiating culture change, fund raising)
- Alone on Stage – The courage of the Pitcher or the Stand-up Comedian (confidential matters, decision making)
- Deliberative Courage – The courage of the judge, jury and executioner (hiring and firing)
- Courage in the Face of Pain – The courage of the EMT (reacting quickly, crises in the school)

From Courageous Headship by Michael Thompson in Independent School Fall 2011



Am I a courageous leader?

How easy or hard are these real life tests of courage for you?



- Admitting your mistakes to your spouse or your child.
- Confronting a difficult peer about his/her attitude.
- Letting your son suffer the consequences for his actions.
- Correcting someone who gives you too much credit for your team's success.
- Stopping a friend from driving after they had 3 drinks at happy hour.
- Retracting a lie you told earlier and asking for forgiveness.
- Tell your boss what you really think about her idea versus staying quiet.
- Calling your boss about a mistake before he finds out on his own.
- Taking immediate action when a difficult employee causes a problem.
- Admit you haven't done a good job on these and other test of *Courage* and commit to making progress.

[Ten Courage Tests For Leaders](http://www.andersonleadershipsolutions.com/ten-courage-tests-leaders/)

<http://www.andersonleadershipsolutions.com/ten-courage-tests-leaders/>





Courage in Character and Challenges



- The area of positive psychology has focused attention on strengths and virtues such as courage which have the potential to enhance well-being. Courage reveals a measure of strength of character by first asking us to question what is important and then by testing our willingness to risk our own safety for the purpose of protecting what we hold dear.
- Research by Stanley Rachman has explored fear and fearlessness and the positive effects of training and confidence. How persons confront internal and external challenges depends, in part, on the nature and quality of their courage and the degree of courage may define the extent to which their lives are marked by active exploration, confidence, and a general sense of well-being.

The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology, Wiley Blackwell. Shane Lopez, ed. 2013 pgs 247-254





Activity



School principals must juggle many responsibilities all at once. Sometimes these responsibilities are in conflict with each other. Discuss or reflect in writing on the following scenario:

Scenario: You need to give critical feedback to a teacher who is assigning low level skill work to students during the same week that the teacher's grandmother died.

Conflict: Student need for challenging assignments vs. maintaining a caring and courteous school culture.)

- How would the virtue of courage help the principal in this case?
- What is important?
- What is the risk that the principal is considering taking?





The Six Attributes of Courage

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mindful-self-express/201208/the-six-attributes-courage>



(1) Feeling Fear Yet Choosing to Act

Fear and courage are brothers. — Proverb

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear — Nelson Mandela

“Bran thought about it. 'Can a man still be brave if he's afraid?' 'That is the only time a man can be brave,' his father told him.” — George R.R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*

There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The true courage is in facing danger when you are afraid. — L.Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Being terrified but going ahead and doing what must be done—that's courage. The one who feels no fear is a fool, and the one who lets fear rule him is a coward. — Piers Anthony

Courage is about doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared. Have the courage to act instead of react.” — Oliver Wendell Holmes



Attributes of Courage, cont'd.

(2) Following Your Heart

To dare is to lose one's footing momentarily. To not dare is to lose oneself.
— Soren Kierkegaard

And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and [intuition](#). They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” — Steve Jobs, Stanford commencement speech, June 2005

“It takes courage ... to endure the sharp pains of self discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.” — Marianne Williamson, "Return to [Love](#): Reflections on the Principles of 'A Course in Miracles'"

“Passion is what drives us crazy, what makes us do extraordinary things, to discover, to challenge ourselves. Passion is and should always be the heart of courage.” — Midori Komatsu



Attributes of Courage, cont'd.



(3) Persevering in the Face of Adversity

A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer. — Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882)

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow. — Mary Anne Radmacher

“It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.” — Mark Twain

When we are afraid we ought not to occupy ourselves with endeavoring to prove that there is no danger, but in strengthening ourselves to go on in spite of the danger. — Mark Rutherford

“Go back?” he thought. “No good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only thing to do! On we go!” So up he got, and trotted along with his little sword held in front of him and one hand feeling the wall, and his heart all of a patter and a pitter.” — J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*





Attributes of Courage, cont'd

(4) Standing Up For What Is Right

From caring comes courage. — Lao Tzu

Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes — Maggie Kuhn, Social Activist

Sometimes standing against [evil](#) is more important than defeating it. The greatest heroes stand because it is right to do so, not because they believe they will walk away with their lives. Such selfless courage is a victory in itself — N.D.

Wilson, Dandelion Fire

[Anger](#) is the prelude to courage. — Eric Hoffer





Attributes of Courage, cont'd



(5) Expanding Your Horizons; Letting Go of the Familiar

Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore. — Lord Chesterfield

“This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.” — Robert F. Kennedy

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage. — Anais Nin





Attributes of Courage, cont'd

(6) Facing Suffering With Dignity or Faith...

- **“There is no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bear witness that a man has the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.” — Frank**
- **The ideal man bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of circumstances. — Aristotle**
- **A man of courage is also full of faith. — Marcus Tullius Cicero**



Activity: Growing your Courage



Using the previous 6 slides as examples, reflect on a time in your life when you felt afraid and yet faced your fear.

- *What did you think and feel at the time?*
- *What did you or others say, think or do to help you face your fear?*
- *When did your fear diminish?*

Now think of a situation that is fear-inducing to you. How can you apply what worked previously to the current situation?



What are some “Guiding Principles for Courageous School Leaders in 21st Century”?

Adapted from *Leadership Courage: Leadership Strategies for Individual and Organizational Success* by David Cottrell and Eric Harvey by John Robinson. From [http://the21stcenturyprincipal.blogspot.com/](http://the21stcenturyprincipal.blogspot.com/2012/09/9-principles-of-courageous-leadership.html)

[2012/09/9-principles-of-courageous-leadership.html](http://the21stcenturyprincipal.blogspot.com/2012/09/9-principles-of-courageous-leadership.html)



1. Accept responsibility courageously.
2. Implement change courageously.
3. Hiring people using strict standards.
4. Keeping everyone focused on what’s important.
5. Communicate for understanding.
6. Coaching others.
7. Effectively address conflict.
8. Keep focus on the positive.
9. Instill a culture of ethics and integrity.



Developing Courage in Others:



Discuss or Reflect in Writing:

Bill Treasurer, author of Courageous Leadership identifies three ways to give employees courage:

- *Nudge people into discomfort*
- *Reward smart failures*
- *Eliminate brown-nosing*





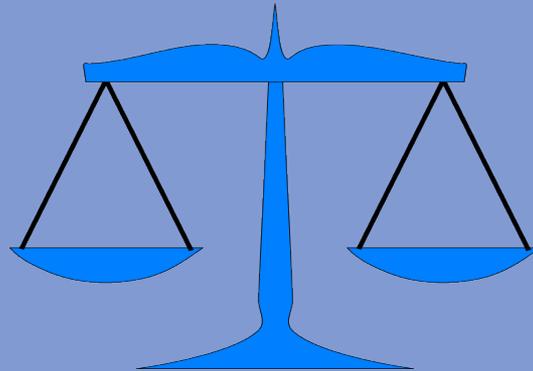
Courage



Aristotle would remind us that virtue in this instance is finding the balance between
and

Recklessness

Cowardice



in the educational setting





Closing Activity

“Triangle-Square-Circle”



Reflection

1. Draw a **triangle** and next to it write down **three important points** from the module.
2. Draw a **square** and next to it write down anything that “**squares**” **with your thinking**.
3. Draw a **circle** and next to it write down anything that is still “**circling**” **in your head or questions** that you have.

Partially quoted from:

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/triangle-square-circle>





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