

Courage

This is the first week of our Courage unit. Students will focus on courage and how it connects to the sub-concept of vulnerability when we take risks.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

Main Lesson

Whole Class Lesson
30 minutes



Ever Done That?

Students will be introduced to the concepts of courage and vulnerability and practice these concepts by sharing traits that make them special and unique. (See page 2 for lesson details.)

Mini Lessons

For Small Groups
15 minutes



Describe Courage

Divide class into small groups of 4-6. Have each group use words to create a thought bubble that illustrates what courage looks like. Encourage them to include examples of vulnerability too! Examples include standing up for yourself, using kind words in the face of hatred, etc. See below for a thought bubble template if desired.

For Partners
15 minutes



Recovering

With a partner, discuss the following question and brainstorm 2-3 answers to share with the class: “How can you “recover” when you are vulnerable and the reaction from others is negative or hurtful?”

For Individuals
15 minutes



Personal Identity Circles

Using circles to represent different aspects of what makes you unique, create a poster to illustrate different components of yourself. Begin by drawing a large circle in the middle of your paper with your name in it. Around this circle, add other circles of different sizes that represent aspects of your identity. If one component is more important, increase the size of your circle. Likewise, if the concept is less important in your mind, make that circle smaller.

Technology-Focused
15 minutes



Courage Emoji

Create an emoji to represent courage to you. This does NOT have to be a face. Use your creativity and vulnerability to design a truly personal emoji that illustrates what courage means to you. Explain your emoji and the reasoning behind it with the rest of the class if time allows.

Ever Done That?

Students will be introduced to the concepts of courage and vulnerability and practice these concepts by sharing traits that make them special and unique.

Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

Required Materials

- Index Cards
- Pencils

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explore the connection between courage and vulnerability
- Examine what courage looks like within their own lives and how to incorporate a variety of courageous moments moving forward

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Welcome to the Courage Unit, the last unit of the year! Great job working through this curriculum with your students! Think about everything they have learned and all of the ways you have seen them demonstrate respect, caring, inclusiveness, integrity, and responsibility throughout the year. Now you get to show them what courage and kindness look like. What a powerful combination! We might not naturally think about courage and kindness together, but in reality, kindness is the ultimate form of courage. It is the courage to be kind to ourselves and to others (especially if we don't feel like it). Do you need a shot of courage at this point in the year? Is it getting harder to be kind and patient?

Do you have added pressure to get everything finished by year's end? Would it be easier to simply coast through May and into June? Maybe. But, be strong and have courage; you will make it and so will your students. Walk bravely into the final weeks; pour an extra measure of kindness out to your students, especially the ones who have really hung in there all year long. They need your strength now more than ever. Be extra kind to yourself, too. You made it. You are doing it. Another year is nearly in the books and you are so much better for it. Think about all you have done, learned, and experienced. Take note of how it has changed your teaching approaches and mindset. How are you a better teacher today than you were at the start of the year? There is no one more courageous in your classroom than you. Embrace it and move bravely, kindly onward!



Share

3-5 minutes

Think back to a time when you were able to use courage in one of the mentioned situations. Share your example with a neighbor. (Invite student responses.) All of these scenarios require a great deal of courage. These middle years are full of opportunities to exercise courage as we continue to increase our time away from our families and expand our social circles to a wider variety of people that share different beliefs and perspectives than ourselves.



Inspire

4-6 minutes

We have arrived at our final unit of the year: Courage! Now that you have navigated middle school for nearly two full years, your daily experience with the need for courage has definitely expanded! Many of you have found yourselves using courage as you stand up for what you believe in, help others that are being bullied or excluded, and even finding the strength to resist the temptation to participate in choices that go against your own beliefs or moral code.

One component that many people struggle with under the heading of courage is the concept of vulnerability. Although the focus of middle school years is often to figure out how to “fit in”, it takes courage to be willing to “stick out”, or making yourself vulnerable to what others might think and say. Vulnerability is showing the world your true colors, what makes you special and unique, even when it might not match up directly with others around you. This includes both internal and external components of yourself. Your beliefs, your morals, your personal decisions in a variety of situations, and even the willingness to try something when others are reluctant are all different aspects of vulnerability. You are willing to take the risk that others might react negatively based on your decisions, but you are courageous enough to stay true to you, regardless of what others think or say!

Think about a time when you stood up for what you believe in, even though it wasn't the popular opinion. How did that make you feel? You allowed yourself to be vulnerable. Most courageous acts require a certain level of vulnerability!



Empower

15 minutes

Explain that the class will now play a guessing game called Who Am I? To practice both courage and vulnerability as each person highlights three positive things about themselves.

Directions:

- Explain that each student (and the teacher!) will receive an index card.
- On the lined side of the index card each person will write 3 positive things about themselves.
- Note: Try to describe yourself using features and characteristics that are unique to you BUT also not too obvious to the rest of the class! Now's your chance to practice vulnerability as you decide what to share!
- Leave your card anonymous.
- After every person has completed their card, they will turn it into the teacher.
- The teacher will read each card aloud and have the class guess which person they are describing.
- Repeat until all of the cards have been read.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Guide a discussion on how it felt to share personal things with the rest of the class.

- What aspect of this activity was the most difficult?
- How does it show courage to be vulnerable?

Emphasize the importance of vulnerability as a subconcept or “partner” with courage. Whether you are the first to try something, a volunteer for something unknown, or the person to stand up for injustice, you allow yourself to be vulnerable.

This week challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone in one area of your life. Take a risk, and use courage to make yourself a little vulnerable when you stand up for something, try something new, or volunteer in a new area. Each act of courage empowers you to move forward and continue overcoming fears and challenging injustice.



Climbed a Mountain?



Broken Up a Fight?



Tried an exotic or unknown food?



Spoke in front of a large group of people (25+)?



Tried out for a new sport?



Competed in an academic competition like the science fair or 4-H?



Stood up to a bully?



Introduced yourself to a new student at school?