



Parent Page

The Trait of the Month is: **Courage**

*Courage is not the towering oak
That sees storms come and go,
Courage is the fragile blossom
That opens in the snow
--Alice MacKenzie Swaim*

Courage – To face a challenge without fear; having the determination to do the right thing even when others don't.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is taking action in the face of fear. This month, we provide a story and a few activities that will teach your child about courage.

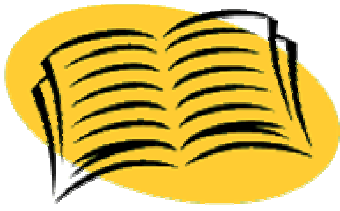


Courage is often associated with soldiers, police officers, fire fighters, and astronauts. These people are courageous, but it also takes courage to be a good parent and a good citizen.

It takes courage to fight the temptations and struggles in everyday life. It takes courage to succeed when others would like to see you fail. Finally, it takes courage to stand up for those less fortunate. No one would disagree that courage is a valuable character trait—one that will serve as a foundational piece in your child's life.

To Do List

1. Go over the **Courage Poster** together and put it on the refrigerator.
2. Read the attached **Story** with your child and discuss the **Questions** at the end.
3. Do at least one **Additional Activity** to reinforce the courage character trait.
4. Write a short comment on the **Puzzle Piece** about what your child has learned about courage, cut out the puzzle piece, and have your child return it to school.



Bamboo People

By Mitali Perkins

The soldiers had set fire to our village. Since I was a baby, I had fallen asleep to the music of rustling bamboo leaves. Now the bamboo, like my people, was almost gone.

The Burmese army wanted our land, our green rice paddies, and our sparkling rivers.

Some of my friends and relatives fled to hiding places in the jungle nearby, hoping and praying that they could return to the village soon. Others, like us, risked the longer journey to the refugee camp across the border in Thailand.

The camp looked like our village, but it wasn't the same. We couldn't leave the area. We couldn't work to earn money. We couldn't even plant our own food.

Each month, a relief truck brought food and medicine. My father and the other camp leaders divided the supplies carefully and stored the extra. They would carry heavy bags of medicine, clothes, food, and books to our people in hiding. How I wanted to join them! It was the only way to keep our people alive until we were free to go back to our village.

My cousin Sayareh and I decided to prepare ourselves. Day after day, we helped the men cut the bamboo that lined the river.

Then one morning, Father's bag stood packed and ready by the door. It was time for another journey.

"Tooreh! Sayareh!" Father called. "One of the men is sick. To replace him, we must test you boys."

"Which boys will take the test?" he asked.

Wareh pointed to the biggest boy. "You first. Carry the pack to the river, walk to the bend and then turn back. I will time how long you take."

The boy swung the pack on his shoulders and surged forward. We ran after him. If the river had been slow and shallow, he could have walked straight down the middle. But the straight course was full of shaded, slippery rocks and the current was strong in many places. The boy zigzagged instead, leaping from one sunny, dry rock to another and staying in shallow waters. When he finished, the pack was dry and his time was good.

Next was Sayareh's turn. I ran beside him, shouting encouragement. I knew he'd do the same for me. At the bank, he ran headlong into the water.

"Look out!" I called, staying close behind him.



Bamboo People (continued)

Sayareh slipped and fell with the pack on top of him. The swift current dragged his head under. With all my strength, I lunged forward and grabbed the handle on the pack. Sayareh was still clutching the rope that bound it.

"Don't let go!" I shouted. Slowly, I managed to drag him and the pack back to shallow water.

We trudged back to the group with Father easily carrying the pack.

"You can do it, Tooreh," Sayareh whispered, staying close to me even though I knew he was fighting shame and disappointment.

My first push took me to the river. I waded in, and the pack slid into the water with a splash. Struggling to my feet and hoisting it up again, I tried to think clearly.

Then I caught sight of the bamboo leaning over the water. I splashed across the river and grabbed one strong, flexible stalk. Using one stalk after another, I swung myself from one slippery rock to the next.

By the time I made it back to the group, I was gasping for air. After dropping my load, I slumped on the ground beside Sayareh. I had taken much longer than the first boy, but at least I had made it. My father could hold his head high, even if I couldn't join him on the journey into the jungle. I choked back my disappointment at the thought of him leaving without me.

"We have the makings of good men here," Wareh said. "But one of them is most suited to go on this journey."

He placed his hand on the shoulder of the big boy, who had made the task look so easy. "You did well," he said. "We will take you next time."

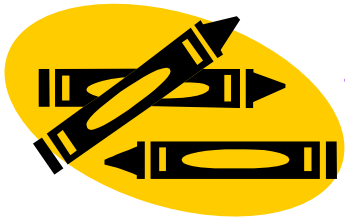
"Tooreh's time was not the fastest," Wareh said. "But he was the first one in the river to help his cousin. The pack was twice as heavy after it got wet, but he didn't complain. He used the bamboo to give him strength when his own was running out. He never gave up. Tooreh is the kind of man we will need in our time of trouble."

He lifted the pack. "Will you carry this again?" he asked me. "It will be lighter on the journey home."

"I will," I answered, looking over at Father, who was smiling and standing tall.

Story Questions

1. Courage does not only have to do with physical strength. Explain how it can take courage to be honest, kind, helpful, or compassionate.
2. Does it take courage to stand up for what you believe? What would you do if a bully asked you to steal for him?
3. Have you ever been afraid to do what you know is right to do? What did you do or what should you have done?



Additional Activities

1. Tell your child about a time when you were in a scary situation, but used courage to succeed. Next, ask and discuss the questions:
 - What does courage mean to you? Give examples.
 - How do you feel when you are brave?
2. Ask your child, "Who is your hero?" Work with your child to write a story about the hero. Encourage him or her to explain how the hero has courage.
3. Help your child circle the one word in each line that is spelled correctly. Discuss the definitions of each word.

halpful

helpful

helphul

hepful

courage

curage

cerrige

kurij

srong

strawn

strawg

strong

brova

brave

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protekt

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