



Community of Character

Moral Courage

May

Moral Courage

Character Qualities

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Thankfulness
- Caring
- Perseverance
- Unity
- Integrity
- Service
- Moral Courage
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Self Control

“Be brave enough to stand up for what is right, although it may not be popular or easy, and even if you stand alone.”

Anonymous

City of Mission Viejo
 200 Civic Center
 Mission Viejo, CA 92691

Moral courage is being brave enough to stand up for what is right, although it may not be popular or easy, and even if you stand alone. There is often a risk and a cost associated with *moral courage*. It is important to note that there are different forms of courage. Most often when we think of courage, we think of acts of bravery, which could hurt the body—such as running into a burning building or onto a battlefield in war. That physical type of courage is important but is not often required in most of our lives. *Moral courage* is different from physical courage, and our *moral courage* is tested every day. Living according to moral principles usually requires us to take a risk. There may be a cost to us—monetary costs, ridicule, or damage to relationships or a career. *Moral courage* is to take action or make a decision for moral reasons—to do the right thing, in spite of the risk of a cost or an adverse consequence.

Every day, the situations we face challenge our good character. Our actions or our decisions in handling these circumstances reveal our *moral courage*. Stephen Covey’s book, *First Things First*, refers to a “moment of choice,” and how integrity has to fit quickly between a stimulus and a response. In this pause, an individual has to think about the position he will take. It requires *moral courage* to make choices that may not be popular or understood by others but that keep your integrity whole. It requires *moral courage* to stand strong against peer pressure. It requires *moral courage* to be honest even if you will suffer a consequence. If we can build our lives on a foundation of good character, it will be easier to act with *moral courage* in this “moment of choice!”

Moral courage can be practiced by anyone, of any age, in any setting. Even a child can stand up to his peers in defense of a principle.

“The Eagle and the Wolf”

There is a great battle that rages inside me. One side is a soaring eagle. Everything the eagle stands for is good and true and beautiful. It soars above the clouds. Even though it dips down into the valleys, it lays its eggs on the mountaintops. The other side of me is a howling wolf. And that raging, howling wolf represents the worst that is in me. He eats upon my downfalls and justifies himself by his presence in the pack. Who wins this great battle?

The one I feed.

True Life Example of Moral Courage

Sara Tucholsky was playing in an important college softball game. Both teams were vying for the Division II NCAA playoffs. Sara, who had batted less than .200 all season, hit the ball over the fence with two runners on base. She had never hit a ball out of the park before. In her excitement, she missed first base. As she turned to go back, her knee gave out and she collapsed in pain. Her first-base coach yelled that she had to crawl back to first base because if anyone on Sara’s team touched her, she’d be out and her home run would not count. Her coach encouraged her to try to crawl around the other bases to preserve her home run, but Sara was in too much pain. At that point, an amazing thing happened! The star player on the other team, Mallory Holtman, asked the umpire if she and a teammate could carry Sara around the bases. Mallory and Liz Wallace lifted Sara and carried her, lowering her to touch each base with her good leg. To Mallory it was a simple decision: “In the end, it’s not about winning and losing so much; it was about this girl. She hit it over the fence and was in pain and deserved a home run.” Although Mallory’s team lost 4-2, Mallory proved to be a winner in *moral courage*. Her decision to do the right thing, even though there was a cost, defined her character. The spectators at the game and around the nation have recognized her as a hero!

Books and Movies of Character

Fiction

Call it Courage by Armstrong Sperry
(5th to 8th grade)

The Cello of Mr. O by Jane Cutler
(Kindergarten to 3rd grade)

Daisy and the Doll by Michael Medearis
(Kindergarten to 3rd grade)

Heroes by Ken Mochizuki
(2nd to 5th grade)

Nory Ryan's Song by Patricia Reilly Giff
(3rd to 7th grade)

The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark
By Carmen Agra Deedy
(3rd to 7th grade)

Dinosaur Chris Does the Right Thing
by Simon Knight (Preschool to 3rd grade)

Nonfiction

A Boy Called Slow: The True Story of Sitting Bull by Joseph Bruchac
(2nd to 5th grade)

Courage by Bernard Waber
(Preschool to 3rd grade)

Jackie Robinson by Tony De Marco
(5th grade and up)

Rescue! True Stories of the Winners of The Young American Medal of Bravery
by Walter R. Brown

Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges
(4th to 7th grade)

The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom

The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey by William Bennett

Moral Courage by Rushworth Kidder

Movies

Glory
Chariots of Fire

Quotes

"Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you." *H. Jackson Brown*

"It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare." *Mark Twain*

"When the test of your character and moral courage comes -- regardless of the noise and confusion around you -- there will be a moment of inner silence in which you must decide what to do. Your character will be defined by your decision...and it is yours and yours alone to make. Success has always demanded...character. Those who can reach...within themselves and draw upon an inner strength, fortified by strong values, always carry the day against those of lesser character. Moral cowards never win."

General Charles C. Krulak, 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps

"Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened." *Billy Graham*

"Moral Courage is the capacity to overcome the fear of humiliation in order to admit one's mistakes, to confess a wrong, to reject evil, to denounce injustice and to defy immoral orders." *William Ian Miller*

What is Moral Courage?

- Doing the "right thing" even if there is a risk or a cost.
- Holding morally sound beliefs and living them out in our lives.
- Being brave enough to stand up for what is right, although it may not be popular or easy, and even if you stand alone.
- Holding strong to your beliefs in practice, although they may not be the popular position.
- Encouraging others to follow your morally sound lead.
- Participating in substance-free activities.
- Standing strong against negative peer pressures.
- Saying "no" to activities or temptations you know are wrong.

Practicing Moral Courage

- Stand up for what is right, even if there is a risk or cost.
- Be a role-model. Your position of **moral courage** may help a friend to make a good decision as well.
- Stand up for someone who is being bullied. Report it to a parent or teacher.
- Be honest in all circumstances.
- Report activities that could hurt others.

Applying Moral Courage

- Make healthy, brave decisions.
- Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- Always act as though someone is watching you.
- Act as an example when you encounter moral dilemmas.
- Role model **moral courage** and good character to your children.
- When you encounter a difficult decision, a temptation, or a situation where you are asked to do something that you believe may be wrong, think about it during a brief "moment of choice." In this short pause, think about the position you will take. With a good character base, you increase your ability to act quickly with **moral courage**.

Personal commitments to Moral Courage:

- I will be brave enough to do what is right, even if it is unpopular and has a risk or cost.
- I will act as an example for my peers.
- I will be honest, even if there is a cost.
- I will not be afraid to "just say no."
- I will stand up for others and myself.
- I will have the courage to be different from everyone else in order to do the right thing.