

# CHARACTER

Courage

April 2009



**Courage: “The ability to confront fear in the face of pain, danger or intimidation.”**

Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines courage as, “The moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.” The word courage literally means strong of heart.

Courage is so vital to our very survival in the face of trial that Winston Churchill said, “Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others.” When German forces intended to invade and conquer the British Isles, it was Churchill and a few other brave men and women who, with great courage, rallied their countrymen to stand and fight tyranny to save their country from sure conquest. As Churchill once said, “never have so many owed so much to so few.”

Courage is the character trait we ascribe to the heroic actions of those in uniform, military and civil, who serve our country in circumstances that often place their lives in great danger, sometimes resulting in the ultimate sacrifice as they save others. We can be grateful to the many brave individuals who, on September 11, 2001, working to save others from certain death in the destruction of the twin towers, knowingly forfeited their own lives. People like Marine Corps Sergeant Byron Norwood, whose mother explained to President Bush that, “When Byron was home the last time, I said that I wanted to protect him like I had since he was born. He just hugged me and said, ‘You’ve done your job, Mom. Now it is my turn to protect you.’”

It took great courage for fearful citizens to go to the polls and cast their ballots in the recent Iraq and Afghanistan elections. Such bravery is reminiscent of the actions of the fifty six men who, on July 4, 1776, signed a document that formally declared the independence of the thirteen colonies from the rule of England. In this endeavor they pledged nothing less than their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor, beginning the process that subsequently granted millions of Americans the right to govern themselves. Their actions made it possible for all Americans to show courage in the face of danger. Not all who exhibit courage are called heroes. But their actions are nevertheless brave, and even essential, to the very survival of our society. I speak now of the young man or woman who, for the sake of their personal convictions, refuses to lie, cheat, steal or commit criminal acts

when many of their peers choose otherwise. For example, a recent survey entitled the “Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth” revealed that 7 in 10 students admitted cheating on a test at least once within the past year, 92 percent had lied to their parents in the past year and 78 percent had lied to their teachers.

As shocking as these statistics appear, there is hope that this trend can be reversed. Carleton Kendrick, a family therapist for Family Education.com, suggests that parents have the courage to be good examples for their children by doing the following:

*Walk it and talk it, that is, live ethically yourself:* For example, don’t tell your kids to be honest, then ask them to lie for you when you don’t wish to speak to someone on the phone. These types of behaviors tell children that they don’t have to face problems or difficulties with honest courage.

*Don’t measure or punish because of grades or scores:* Children will sometimes lie or cheat because they fear a parent will punish, or lose affection for them, when their performance does not meet their parent’s expectation. Parents should focus instead on effort and progress, always letting the child know that they are loved.

*Don’t play the shame/blame game:* Kendrick thinks that all children experiment with lying and do so with a particular goal in mind. To quote Kendrick, “It’s a parent’s job to find out what the goals are, but instead of being accusatory or distrustful try an empathetic approach such as: ‘You know Bobby, I know you are a wonderful boy who always wants to tell the truth. There must be something going on to make you think about lying. I want to find out what made you change your mind about telling the truth.’” Such an approach can be tailored to tots or teens and is less likely to lead children to be defensive or refuse to talk when a parent wants to talk about truthfulness or any other problem. Let’s help our children have courage by teaching and living the principles that we know will get us and them through life with the dignity and success that is honorable.

Doug Austin  
Lindon Resident

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“There are too many people praying for mountains of difficulty to be removed, when what they really need is courage to climb them.”

–Unknown

“No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”

–John Donne

“Courage is a special kind of knowledge: the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared.”

–David Ben-Gurion

## Book List

### “The Legend of Sleeping Bear”

by Kathy-Jo Wargin

### “Cello of Mr. O”

by Jane Cutler

### “One More Border”

by William Kaplan and Shelley Tanaka

### “The Lost Sailor”

by Pam Conrad

### “Seven Brave Women”

by Betsy Hearne



## Family Activities

–In L. Frank Baums *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* the Cowardly Lion asks Oz to give him courage. The wizard pours some liquid from a square green bottle into a green-gold dish and bids the Cowardly Lion to drink it. Oz explains, “You know, of course, that courage is always inside one, so that this really cannot be called courage until you have swallowed it.” Serve green punch and talk about the courage of the lion before and after his visit to Oz. *Talk about challenges to family members and the traits and courage they already possess that help them meet their challenges.*

–Mary Bryant said, “Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.” *Play a new game, visit a new site, or experience something good that your family has never tried before.*

–Joseph Pulitzer was born on April 10, 1847 in Mako, Hungary. At 17 he left home in search of military adventure, but was rejected because of poor eyesight and health by the armed forces of Austria, France and Great Britain. Finally, he enlisted with the Union Army to fight in the Civil War. Afterward, he became a citizen and a laborer, then a reporter for a German-language newspaper. Later he bought a struggling New York paper and turned it into the largest circulating newspaper in the nation. Part of his fortune was used to fund a journalism school and the Pulitzer Prizes in journalism, literature, drama and music. *How important is courage in starting and succeeding in new and unfamiliar experiences?*

By Laura Clement

## Kid’s Corner

**Courage means doing what you need to regardless of your fear. You might be afraid of your abilities or be embarrassed or uncomfortable doing something you might fail at. Sometimes it means standing up for others or for what is right and going against the crowd. We might be afraid of the social consequences including rejection or even physical pain. When others are cruel or intentionally misunderstand you, especially in front of others, it would be easy to "react" the way they are acting. Sometimes it takes courage to walk away! Courage is doing your duty with integrity regardless of the consequences.**

--Cynthia Bybee, age 13

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