



Courage

At a Glance

What is Courage?

Courage is often defined as the intersection of fear, purpose, and action. It is courageous to do something in spite of fear for a greater goal. Let's examine these parts further:

- **Fear:** By this definition, courage depends on the presence of fear, not its absence. Therefore, it also depends on each person's comfort zone—the same act may require different levels of courage for different people.
- **Purpose:** Courage is not *only* about one's relationship with risk or fear. A risky action must also serve a greater purpose to be considered true courage. Thus, thrill-seeking behaviors aren't covered by this definition of courage.
- **Action:** If courage is limited to having strong values and knowing what one should do, without including what one actually does, it is constrained to the realm of theory and not practice. Courage is rooted in aligning one's actions with one's beliefs, especially when it is difficult.

In the age of AI, which aspect of Courage should be emphasized?

For each competency, a modern emphasis is determined based on the relative importance of the competencies in an AI landscape, as well as the potential for the competency (and its subcompetencies) to be automated in an age of AI. Courage remains deeply rooted in human psychology and behavior, influenced by a multitude of factors beyond the scope of AI.

In the age of AI, **emphasize risk-taking** because it fosters courage, innovation, and adaptability, preparing students for a dynamic future. When education cultivates risk-taking, it encourages entrepreneurial thinking, ethical awareness in AI development, and the skills needed for effective leadership in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

What other words and concepts are associated with Courage?

Bravery, Confidence, Determination, Fortitude, Audacity, Inspiration, Zeal, Cheerfulness, Humor, Optimism, Self-Esteem, Responsibility, Accountability, Humbleness, Modesty, Heroism, Charisma, Leading by Example



How can I best teach Courage?



Tips to follow...	Pitfalls to stay aware of...
<p>Courage must be carefully tailored to an individual and to a context so that each learner has a chance to practice what they personally feel is courageous. This is not a one-size-fits-all model, what is scary for one student may not be for another!</p>	<p>Many education systems have little tolerance for risk-taking and errors in student work, reducing the opportunities a learner has to be courageous. Even if your classroom is different, learners will likely be used to this way of operating.</p>
<p>For many learners, asking for help requires courage and can make an impact on their ability to succeed in the academic system. This can be an accessible way for learners to practice courage.</p>	<p>Courageous actions don't have to be large, systemic, or end in martyrdom. People can take action because they believe it's the right thing to do in daily interactions and at institutional levels.</p>
<p>Creating incentives for risk-taking and failures in your classroom can help create the space for courage. Whether through grades or other motivators, seek ways to encourage students to take chances.</p>	<p>Being courageous is often mistakenly assumed as "coming with a price," but courageous people don't necessarily have to pay for their actions. They just as often benefit from the positive change.</p>

To foster Courage, use language such as:

- **"It's brave to try something new, even if it doesn't work out."** Acknowledge the effort involved needed to step outside of one's comfort zone and remember fear is a necessary ingredient of courage.
- **"Thanks for your honesty and speaking up."** It's not easy for students to share vulnerable thoughts or feelings. Praise the effort to encourage this risk-taking.
- **"Your perspective is valuable"** and **"asking questions are a sign of strength, not weakness."** Empower learners to engage with material actively and cultivate a non-judgmental environment where all voices are heard and valued.

And when focusing on Courage, avoid the following approaches:

- **"This is your only chance."** High-stakes moments or assessments can be necessary, but recognize that they will push learners to be more cautious.
- **Shaming wrong answers.** As wrong answers are inevitable and necessary for growth, students need environments with safe conditions to more freely take risks.
- **"Now you're stuck."** Viewing failures as dead-ends encourages students to prioritize avoiding them, rather than seeking high-risk high-reward opportunities.



Subcompetencies

To create more targeted learning experiences for courage, teachers can use the following subcompetencies as specific learning objectives. Classroom exercises and activities then can infuse subcompetencies into student learning to create deliberate, explicit, comprehensive, systematic, and demonstrable areas for growth. All subcompetencies in the CCR Framework are identified by a brief code for shorthand (i.e., COU1).

Subcompetency	Description
COU1: Pursuing ambitious visions, despite risks	It takes courage to set sights high and reach for something that is far from guaranteed. This is courageous when prompted by the situation but is even more ambitious when it is a result of internal desires without external motivating pressure.
COU2: Leading with initiative and accountability	Courageous leaders step forward, take charge, and initiate action even in uncertain situations. By consistently accepting responsibility for outcomes and acting with integrity, they demonstrate by example how to maintain high standards while seeing tasks to completion.
COU3: Engaging with others in a vulnerable way	Whether it's approaching someone new, deepening an existing connection, or asking for help , being vulnerable with others takes courage because one could potentially be hurt, embarrassed, or disappointed.
COU4: Acknowledging one's strengths and weaknesses	It takes courage to celebrate one's strengths with confidence, reframe one's weaknesses as opportunities for growth , and take action to put oneself in situations which play well to both.
COU5: Believing in one's agency and self-efficacy.	The belief that one is able to achieve what one wants to achieve , and that one has the power to affect things in the world, is empowering. While it can be affected slightly by others, its core resides within the individual and their self-identity, and provides them courage.

Growth Rubrics

The growth rubrics on the following page are a synthesis of the global research body on courage and are designed to provide an opportunity for formative reflection on a competency based on a performance in a specific context. They are not meant to be holistic or measure the worth of a person in a high-stakes way, but rather to enable dialogues between educators and learners, creating space for feedback and opportunities for future improvement. **The rubrics are not age-specific, and progress through the levels may be slow and vary greatly depending on the context of the task.**



COU1: Pursuing ambitious goals, despite risks

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I prefer to do things within my personal comfort zones, rather than setting goals to try new things.	I set goals that I know are realistic for me and achievable.	I set realistic goals that may require risks but lean on backup plans if there is uncertainty.	I am willing to endure setbacks in order to strive for a goal that others may think is out of reach.

COU2: Leading with initiative and accountability

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I hesitate to take charge in uncertain situations, deflecting responsibility to others.	I initiate action when reminded. I accept responsibility when it is convenient or low-stakes.	I step in and lead when I see a need. Accepting the responsibility for the outcome scares me.	I anticipate the need for leadership and fill it, upholding high standards of accountability.

COU3: Engaging with others in a vulnerable way

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I shut down or struggle to authentically open up or ask for help, fearing others may judge me.	I self-censor my authentic beliefs, and sometimes act in ways that aren't true to me because I'm afraid of how others might react.	I accept the consequences of sharing honestly, being myself, asking for help, and opening up to others.	I intentionally create situations in which I and others can stretch our comfort zones and be honest with each other.

COU4: Acknowledging one's strengths and weaknesses

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I consider myself average at most things and have blind spots in my own capabilities.	I know I have strengths and weaknesses, but I struggle to pinpoint them precisely or work with them in my life.	I recognize my strengths and weaknesses and put myself in situations that take advantage of my unique skill set.	I gather feedback on my strengths and weaknesses, seeking situations to play to strengths, mitigate gaps, and grow.

COU5: Believing in one's agency and self-efficacy

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
As an individual, I presume my choices will have little impact on myself or those around me.	I acknowledge I can do some things well, but I view my capabilities as mostly fixed.	I know my effort matters, and that by trying hard I can usually figure out a way to reach my goals.	I use a growth mindset to focus my efforts and acquire the support to do anything I set my mind to.