

Behavior Bytes *from the Social Worker and Counselor*

February's Character Focus: COURAGEOUS

The character traits are interconnected in a very important way. It turns out that working on one trait has an effect on the other traits. As some of the different activities that make us more courageous they tend to make us stronger in other areas.

FOR PARENTS: Ways to Nurture Courage and Understanding (www.familiesonlinemagazine.com)

While it's important to protect and reassure our children in today's turbulent times, it's also important to focus on courage. If we completely shield our children from every challenging situation, they are likely to become more vulnerable to manipulation, fear and intimidation. Today, it's especially important to find a balance between protecting our children and teaching them to courageously and compassionately protect themselves and others.

- **Encourage children's dreams.** Anticipate success and encourage the belief that your child can do, be, or have anything that he or she desires.
- **Encourage perseverance.** When we encourage our children to try, try, try again, we are helping them to develop the courage to get up after a setback and to have faith in their ability to succeed.
- **Teach children relaxation and self-calming skills.** Children become more resilient to fear-inducing situations when they can mindfully quiet and relax themselves and interrupt the fight-or flight response.
- **Desensitize your child to his or her fear.** By gradually exposing your children to their fears, you will be helping them to take progressive steps toward overcoming them.
- **Clear up misconceptions.** Discuss the reality of your child's fear in a manner that's appropriate for their age and developmental level.
- **Build a child's self-concept.** Children who have a positive self-concept will be more likely to see the good in others and be confident in themselves.

FOR Students: Ways to Nurture Courage and Understanding (www.productiveflourshing.com)

- **Name Your Phobias and Conquer Them.** There's a difference between being uncomfortable in situations and having a spine-tingling phobia of something. The thing is, some phobias are such that they keep us from being successful. Muster up the courage

to name your fears and work through the feelings they generate. The reality is that you may just become uncomfortable with whatever you're currently scared of, but you can still do what needs to be done.

- **Handle Tough Emotions when They Come up.** A lot of people shove tough emotions down when they come up and they never deal with what is causing the feelings. Some are afraid of the feelings and what might happen if they let the feelings out. It's hard to make good decisions about yourself if you don't know who you are.
- **Talk to Someone Who Is Not like You.** We naturally tend to be friends with people who are very much like us. Though there's nothing wrong with this, it has a tendency to make us very narrow-minded when it comes to different ideas and opinions of others. Find someone who is different or has ideas/ opinions different from your own and talk to them. Try to understand their position. It takes courage to listen to others who may not agree with you.
- **Tell Your Friends "No."** Many people are scared to tell a friend "no" because they're afraid they will lose a friendship. Sometimes we need to tell a friend "no", particularly if the friend is wanting you to do something wrong, such as lie for them or do something with them that is wrong. Sometimes a friend may ask too much of you, such as spending a lot of time together when you need to do something else. It's okay to say "no".
- **Stand up for What's Right when It's Hard to Do.** It's really easy to stand up for what's right when everyone else is already doing it. It's much more frightening to be the first person to stand up for something or to be part of a small group who are going against the tide of injustice or social slights.