

# Courage

*Noun*

the power or quality of dealing with or facing danger, fear, pain

# Courage

## Ethos of Learning

“I see courage every day both inside and outside the classroom. Without it the school will never move forward.”

Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster

Life can be scary and it's nice and comforting to feel safe. This is fine and normal. Most people want to feel comfortable and safe. In fact, most people spend much of their lives striving to feel comfortable and safe. The concern is that if you spend all your time in this state you may forget to impress, progress and develop. It is important to come out of that comfort zone every so often, to dare yourself to be brave and to make a change. There are plenty of courageous heroes many of us may aspire to emulate, Churchill, Shackleton and Fiennes to name but a few. But perhaps it is harder to be a courageous young man in this day and age. If Winston made an error it was not instantly shared with the world via twitter and facebook. Modern media heighten the fear of failure or rejection making those first steps ever trickier.

Dr Melanie Greenberg summarises courage in 6 attributes:

- **Feeling fear yet choosing to act**  
“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear” — Nelson Mandela
- **Following your heart**  
“...have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” — Steve Jobs, Stanford commencement speech, June 2005

- **Persevering in the face of adversity**  
“It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.” — Mark Twain
- **Standing up for what is right**  
“From caring comes courage.” — Lao Tzu
- **Expanding your horizons**  
“Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore”. — Lord Chesterfield
- **Facing suffering with dignity**  
“There is no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bear witness that a man has the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.” – Viktor Frankl



### **Physical Courage v Moral Courage**

Physical courage is overcoming the fear of bodily injury, while Moral Courage is overcoming the fear of emotional harm or rejection from others. The Physical Courage is perhaps what we see more of. I regularly see it from my U15 rugby side on a Saturday. I see it from people attacking the short corner in hockey or going for a real hand-breaker in fives! Physical Courage is a really important aspect of courage, and it is more obvious than Moral Courage. Moral Courage is trickier to see and to celebrate. It might be seeing a boy stand up for one of his pals. It might be a boy putting his arm around a loved one going through a tough time. It may just be a supportive look. It might be picking someone for your football team just so he is not picked last. The major difference in my eyes between Physical and Moral Courage is that the latter rarely requires physical attributes. Hence, we all have more of a chance to be morally courageous. It does not mean we need to be any less brave.

### **Courage at RGS**

I think courage is demonstrated regularly at RGS. As mentioned above we certainly see Physical Courage, but I am fortunate in my role that I also get to see Moral Courage from time to time. We often talk to the boys about, “doing the right thing”. Our message is not to always come and tell a teacher if they see something untoward but to do the “right thing”. This may be to tell a teacher, but it may also be to support a boy or have a word with another boy. Your sons have to find their own moral compass and that comes with role modelling from peers, parents and people in positions of responsibility. It also comes with experience and from learning what the “right

thing” is. I had a situation last week where a student had clearly found a mark scheme for a Geography test. When I handed him his work back, I said it was mightily impressive but some answers seemed very similar to the mark scheme. At the end of the lesson, he came forward and asked if he could have a word. He wanted me to take some of his marks off. Now, of course he should not have done it in the first place but he had the courage to come and see me in very embarrassing circumstances to admit the error of his ways. For me this is courage, this is “doing the right thing”.

**A final thought...**

I see students do the right thing all the time. Perhaps our mission as parents and teachers is to try and spot it and praise them.

*For further information on the Ethos of Learning please refer to the RGS website: [www.rgshw.com](http://www.rgshw.com) or Alex Wallace, Deputy Head, [arw@rgshw.com](mailto:arw@rgshw.com)*