

"I just knew it was me that had to do it" – Courage, Duty and Teamwork Save the Lives of Three Children

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues before the discussion questions.

Lesson Goals

Help students...

- attain a deeper understanding of courage that it isn't a lack of fear but rather not giving way to fear
- see how a personal sense of duty can enable us to live with courage
- consider what values we want to have as the foundation of our sense of duty
- see how we have opportunities to live with courage in our daily lives
- appreciate how significant accomplishments often happen because of a team effort with many people doing what is right and doing their jobs well in pursuit of a goal
- become more aware of potential physical dangers in their community, such as ice that isn't designated as safe for skating

Highlighted Virtues / Character Traits

Courage - the capacity to meet danger and difficult situations without giving way to fear; to have the courage of one's convictions; to be willing to put one's opinions into practice

Duty - something that one is expected or required to do according to one's own standards or values, and the standards and values of groups that we are a part of such as our family, school and larger community

Hero – a person who is regarded as a model due to their acts of courage, or nobility of purpose and noble qualities

Solidarity - unity from a shared common purpose and / or interest; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group

Leader Introduction:

Today we're going to learn about a young woman from Denver whose courage and sense of duty saved the lives of 3 children. Dusti Talavera was in her apartment and noticed 3 children playing on the ice of a pond just outside of her apartment when suddenly the ice gave way and all 3 children plunged into the icy water. Talavera said she knew immediately that she had to help them saying there was no one else around and "I just knew it was me that had to do it". Talavera ran onto the ice and was able to pull a 4-year old girl and 11-year old boy out of the water, but then the ice broke apart underneath her and she was now also in the 15-foot deep pond. Talavera grabbed the remaining 6-year old girl but was struggling to keep her head above water as she was unconscious, and Talavera was unable to throw her up onto the ice as it kept breaking apart. Talavera didn't know how much longer she could keep herself and the girl's head above water.

Fortunately, the girl's teenage cousin then came to their rescue, throwing a rope to Talavera and pulling both of them up onto the shore. Talavera later said, "I'm thankful for that young man who threw the rope. I was struggling myself so I'm really blessed to have someone who is brave enough to do that." Let's now watch a local news account of how others then stepped in to save the 6-year old girl's life, and the reunion of Talavera with the children she and others saved.

Lesson Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpQsD6xg6lo>

Leader Summary:

What an incredible story of courage, duty and teamwork that all came together to save the lives of three children. Let's discuss how this story speaks to our lives.

Discussion Question Options: *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses)*

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions, found in the online lesson as a separate document.

1. How is Talavera a hero? (She was extremely **courageous** in putting aside her own fear of drowning and running onto the ice to try and save the children.)

Let's dig into Talavera's decision to go out onto the ice to save the children. Let's try to place ourselves in her situation and imagine what would go through our minds in deciding whether to try and save them. What would have been your first thought, second, etc. (There is no one else to help them; the ice already gave way from the children so there's a good chance I will fall in as well and drown; I can't let them drown, I have to save them.)

Talavera later said that throughout the incident she just kept thinking "save the kids, save the kids".

2. Being courageous like Talavera doesn't just happen. What other virtue do you think prepared and enabled Talavera to be so courageous? (**Duty** in that she has a strong sense of personal responsibility to do what is right. Talavera commented "I just knew it was me that had to do it".)

Do you think a strong sense of personal duty to do what is right just happens at the moment we are faced with a difficult challenge or crisis, or do you think a strong sense of duty is built over time?

How do you think we can develop a strong sense of duty throughout our lives? (By making the decision to do what is right in thousands of smaller decisions in our lives we prepare ourselves to be able to act when we are faced with bigger decisions, and in Talavera's case a moment of crisis.)

3. **Duty** is what we expect or require of ourselves according to our own standards and values and the values of other groups we are a part of such as our family, school and community. So is the starting point our own values? Let's talk about what values we think are important that we should try to live by. I'll write each suggestion on the board as we discuss them.
(caring and kindness, respect for others, accepting and inclusive, generous and helpful, fair and just, honesty, perseverance in pursuit of goals.....)
This is also a journal writing option below.
4. The girl's father spoke of the many pieces of the puzzle that had to come together to save his daughter's life, saying in the video "God put the right people in the right place to save someone's life". Who are the puzzle pieces that came together? (Talavera in the initial rescue, the teenage boy who saved Talavera, the police officers who first responded and gave the girl CPR to get her breathing again, the firemen who provided additional medical support and the doctors and nurses at the hospital)

What does this story teach us about the power of **teamwork**?

(Through teamwork we can accomplish so much more than on our own.)

What does this story teach us about the importance of each member of a team?

(A team cannot succeed and achieve its full potential without each member being well-trained, competent and ready to perform.)

5. When we think about **courage** we often think about stories like this one where someone takes on great physical risk to do what is right. Let's read over the definition of courage again and share examples of other ways we can live with courage in our daily lives.
(Standing up for what is right even when there is the fear of being rejected by others. An example of this is standing up for someone who is being bullied in person or through social media. Another example is stating our opinion and beliefs on an issue of justice or fairness that we know others may not agree with.)
This is also an extended activity below

6. Let's share historical and present-day examples of **courage** that are inspiring to you. These stories can come from politics, social justice movements, war and everyday examples of courage.
This is also an extended activity below.

7. How is this story an example of **solidarity**?
(Many people, most of whom didn't know each other and from different age groups and walks of life, came together unified by a single purpose – to save the children.)

What did the dad say about the people who were performing CPR on his daughter that shows the degree of solidarity that existed that day?

(He said they were treating his daughter as if she were their own calling out to her, "come on baby, come on baby, come on sweetheart, like she was their own child.")

What do you think this story tells us about the potential for us to become more unified as a country, and what it may take for us to build a greater level of solidarity?

(Most people are good and the opportunity to become more unified is there, and we likely need to identify more endeavors that can serve to unify us around shared goals.)

What are the types of endeavors that can unify us more?

(charitable endeavors where people from different backgrounds share the same goals to help others in need; sports teams that include people from different areas; music and other artistic endeavors that bring people together from different communities)

Journal Writing Options

1. Write about 3 values you think are important that should be the foundation for your own sense of duty. Define each value in your own words and 1 to 2 ways you want to live them out in your life.
2. Write about a team in which you are a member. It can be a sports team, a club, a music or art group. Write about your role in the team or group and what you can do to improve your contribution to the team or group. Write out what you think the team or group could accomplish if every member focused on improving their contribution.
3. Read over the definition of hero and then write about someone you look to as a hero in your life and why. Your hero can be someone in your family, school, local community, a present or past political or religious leader, or the leader of a movement for change.

Extended Activity:

Organize students into teams and ask each team to make a presentation to your group on a significant historical or present-day example of courage. Assign each team a subject to focus on such as:

- historical examples of social justice
- modern day examples of social justice
- historical and current examples of heroism in battle by presenting stories of Medal of Honor recipients <https://www.cmoths.org/recipients/overview>
- team skit on a realistic example of courage among students (standing up for someone being bullied etc.)

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