

The Heart of a Hero: Courage in the Line of Duty and Solidarity Beyond the Line

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...

- Identify the qualities that make someone a “hero” and how they can live out some of these qualities in their own lives.
- See the importance of acting courageously, in the face of fear or uncertainty, to help others in need.
- See how living with wisdom can improve the lives of others and their own well-being.
- Gain a broader understanding of the duty of a police officer and their commitment to protect and serve the community.
- Reflect on their own sense of duty as a member of their families and other communities.
- Explore the role of supportive figures that are an ongoing presence in our own lives, whether related by family or not, and the impact that they have.
- See the positive impact we can have on others when we cross over common boundaries to act and live in unity with others.

Highlighted Virtues and 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, moral or legal obligation, especially as it relates to one's status as a citizen and / or member of various communities.

Family Dedication / Support: complete dedication for the well-being of other members of our family, physically, emotionally and spiritually, motivated by love

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; being present with others

Trustworthy: to be a person worthy of confidence where others can rely on us to do or to provide what is right or needed

Wisdom: ability to apply knowledge, experience, and understanding in ways that are effective and good. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting

Leader Introduction:

For today's lesson, we will explore the story of Detective Michael Harton and five year old “Tooka”. On one fateful day in a Connecticut movie theater, Harton's heroic actions saved Tooka's life when she was just a baby. Through his selfless actions, Harton fulfilled his duty as a police officer and shows us the importance of courage, wisdom and being a trustworthy person. The video we will watch does feature some disturbing footage of Harton performing the Heimlich

maneuver on Tooka as a very small infant, which is a first-aid procedure used to treat choking, but don't worry—there's a very happy ending. Let's watch.

Lesson Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1-4Ayxr3qc>

Leader Summary:

Detective Michael Harton's actions show us what it really means to be a hero. Despite the pressure and fear he felt, Harton relied on his training and instincts to perform the measures needed to save Tooka's life, showing remarkable courage in a crisis. Just as exceptional is what Harton chose to do after saving Tooka's life, offering to become a consistent presence of support for Tooka and her family. Harton and Tooka's story remind us of the profound impact that one person's actions can have on the life of another—and how much of a blessing we can all be in each other's lives. Let's see how their story can be applied to our own 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. Let's read over the definition of **courage** and then try and place ourselves in Harton's situation. Even though he didn't face physical danger in taking action to save Tooka's life, why do you think it still required courage?

(Like Harton, we probably would have experienced a high level of fear and nervousness knowing that it is entirely up to you to save the baby's life, and courage isn't just about facing physical dangers but doing what's right in any situation that presents extreme difficulty and risk.)

In performing the actions that saved Tooka's life, what do you think were likely the most difficult for Harton?

(Placing the nervousness and fear aside to remember his training and perform the life-saving measures correctly. It also required significant skill for Harton to exert enough force on Tooka's small body to save her while also not injuring her).

2. Let's look at the definition of a **hero**: a person who is regarded as a model due to their acts of courage, or nobility of purpose and noble qualities.

What are some virtues, or noble qualities that you think can make us **heroes**? They may be highlighted virtues from this story, or something else entirely.

(courage; selflessness in having a positive impact on the lives of others through compassion, generosity and caring; being trustworthy; living with wisdom in a manner that promotes what is good and lasting)

3. What are some ways that we can live with **courage** in our daily lives where we may have to move beyond our fear to do what is right?
(Standing up for someone else who is being bullied or picked on, stating what we believe is true or right even if it isn't popular, advocating within a group to not do something that we know is wrong.)
4. Tooka's mother ran to Harton because he was a police officer, and she could **trust** him to have the training and duty to help her. Who are the people in your life that you can trust if you are in trouble?
(Parents and other family members, teachers, police officers, firefighters, EMTs, friends, coaches)

Let's talk about some of the qualities these people have in our lives that make them **trustworthy**?

5. Reading over the definition of wisdom, how did Harton live with **wisdom** in his actions to save Tooka's life and still with wisdom now years later?
(Harton was able to apply his knowledge of life saving techniques in a way that worked effectively on a very small infant and saved her life. Years later, Harton is still living with wisdom in being a consistent presence of support for Tooka and her family.)

Wisdom is a necessary virtue for all of us to live out for our long term well-being. What are some ways that we can acquire training or knowledge in areas that matter to us and then learn how to apply this knowledge effectively?

(Going to school, studying, reading, preparing to go to college or a trade school, participating in extracurriculars, participating in religious groups, having a job, watching educational videos online.)

Think of the many areas you have understanding and knowledge of right now. It can be a school subject, a sport or hobby, or something else that you are interested in and know how to do. What are some ways you can live with **wisdom** and apply these in ways that are effective and good?

(If needed, encourage students to think of simple but important examples such as helping other students and siblings with a subject they may have difficulty in, helping others to get better in a sport, sharing the joy of playing a musical instrument and even something as simple as teaching younger siblings how to tie their shoes.)

6. Police officers have lots of **duties** to uphold, including public safety like responding to emergencies like Tooka's or car accidents. They also work to enforce laws, build relationships with the communities they serve, and prevent crime before it happens. Different people have different duties, like teachers have the duty to teach children, or doctors to give medical care. What are your duties that you have as a member of your family?
(Helping around the house, caring for younger siblings, being respectful to your parents, following directions, loving and being supportive of all of your siblings and parents)

In addition to family, what are other communities or extracurricular activities that you are a part of that require a sense of **duty**, and in what ways exactly do you expect yourself to act as part of these groups?

7. Tooka calls Harton "Uncle Mike," and Harton said in the interview that Tooka is his "little angel" and "unbeknownst to us, our family grew that day. Everytime I see her, it's a great day." Why do you think that Tooka has such an impact on Harton? What does this tell us about helping others?
(When we are able to help others and to be present with others, it brings us joy.)

Reflecting on Harton and Tooka's story, what does it teach us about the meaning of **family support**?

(Family is there to support us in times of crises and importantly throughout our lives.)

8. How does the virtue of **solidarity** play into the story of Harton and Tooka?
(Harton and his wife are united with Tooka's mother in wanting to help provide what is best for Tooka, which is primarily to love her, to be present with her and to support her.)

Does the solidarity among Harton, Tooka and their families teach us anything special or

unique about **solidarity**?

(We can come into unity with others from much different backgrounds. Love and the desire to care for others can transcend all boundaries.)

Journal Writing Options:

1. Write about a person in your life who has demonstrated courage, and please remember that courage doesn't only involve overcoming the fear of physical danger but also the risk of putting one's opinions into practice or standing up for one's beliefs. How did their actions inspire you, and how can you apply their example to your own life?
2. Consider the concept of family support and what it means to you. How do you define family support in action?

Extended Activity:

1. Organize the students into groups and ask the groups to create and perform a skit that shows a different type of courage. Skits can include physical courage, standing up for someone being bullied, standing up for a belief when your view is in the minority, convincing a group of friends to not do something wrong when everyone else is promoting a bad action.
2. Group students into groups of 2-3, allow students time to brainstorm a list of scenarios, something they have either seen or done or made up entirely, that demonstrate being a hero. Students will then choose one act of courage from their list to illustrate in a comic strip. Encourage students to draw captions or speech bubbles that highlight the virtue of courage.
3. Print out the virtues (attached next page below) and cut each word or definition and place into a pile. Organize students into groups of 2-4 and have them act out whichever virtue they draw for the other students to guess. With this game of charades, students CAN talk, but they cannot say the name of the virtue or the definition. It should be an example of them acting out the virtue. Groups can compete at the same time and whichever group correctly guesses the most virtues first wins. Alternatively, you can play with the more classic version of charades with a timer and present before the entire class for points.

Virtue Charades Cards for Extended Activity

<p>Courage</p>	<p>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.</p>
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Family Dedication/Support	complete dedication for the well-being of other members of our family, physically, emotionally and spiritually, motivated by love
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