

Ordinary Teen, Extraordinary Courage

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...

- Appreciate the importance of living with courage in dangerous and difficult situations
- Consider the qualities that make someone a hero
- Understand what humility looks like, even when being praised for doing something extraordinary.
- Learn how good citizenship involves looking out for others, especially neighbors and community members, and being willing to help in time of need.
- Reflect on how ordinary people—no matter their age—can make a big difference in their communities

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.

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

Humility: modest opinion of one's own position; an honest self appraisal of one's strengths and weaknesses; a lack of false pride; realizing that we don't have all of the answers and being open to learning from others.

Citizenship: the duties, rights, and privileges corresponding to a person being citizen of a state, nation and even simply a member of a local community; the desire to make their state/country/community a better place.

Leader Introduction:

Imagine enjoying a day off of school. Maybe you're practicing sports, spending time with your siblings, or playing video games when you hear something terrifying—a child screaming for help. You look outside and see a house on fire, smoke pouring out of the windows and into the sky and then you see a mom and her children trapped on the roof with no way down. What would you do? Freeze? Run for help? Or would you, like the 16 year old from today's story Tyler Soden, find the courage to act?

Today, we are going to hear the incredible story of Tyler, an ordinary teen from Cleveland, Ohio, who became a hero in just a few quick moments. Tyler didn't have any special training, but he did have courage, quick thinking, and a sense of obligation to help his neighbors when they needed him most.

As we watch his story, think about what it really means to be courageous, and that you don't have to be an adult—or wear a cape—to be a hero in your own community.

Lesson Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rf-l8Ld_60

Leader Summary...

Tyler Soden's story shows us that being a hero isn't about special powers like it is in the movies—it's about making a brave choice when it matters most.

It's also worth noting how humble Tyler stayed while others called him a hero and praised his bravery. He simply said it was what he had to do, and hoped anyone would do for a neighbor. His actions remind us that anyone—regardless of their age—can make a world of a difference in their community. Let's discuss more about Tyler's story, and how we can apply the lessons 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) What did Tyler use to help rescue the family from the burning house?
(His step dad's ladder)

- 2) How did Tyler feel during the rescue according to the interview?
(He admitted he was scared, but also felt he had to save them.)

Do you think being **courageous** means *not* feeling fear, or is it about what you choose to do *even when* you're afraid?

- 3) When you think about someone like Tyler leaping into action and with an act of **courage**, do you think this just happens or do you think individuals like Tyler likely live in a way that makes it more likely they would be able to live with courage? If yes, what specifically would someone do in their everyday lives to prepare to live with courage?
(consistently act with kindness and caring for others; live with empathy in placing ourselves in another person's position)

- 4) Can you think of a situation—not necessarily as dangerous as a fire—where someone your age might need to show **courage**?
(standing up to a bully; standing up for someone who is being made fun of; telling the truth when it's hard; helping in an accident.)

- 5) Why do you think Tyler is considered a **hero**? What noble qualities did he show in addition to being **courageous**?
(He showed quick thinking, selflessness, care for others, and humility when others were praising him.)

- 6) How did the community and officials react to Tyler's actions after the rescue?
(admiration and praise, recognized him as a hero, potentially winning an award, putting him on the news as an example of courage, and even offering him a job when he is old enough to go through firefighter training.)
- 7) Tyler said he didn't think of himself as a **hero**, stating that he just did what needed to be done. What virtue does this show? *(humility)*

Do you think real **heroes** usually act for praise or because they care about others?

- 8) Tyler said he hoped anyone would help a neighbor in need. What virtue does this reflect and why? *(Citizenship, in feeling a sense of duty to help a member of his community)*
- 9) Let's discuss a number of specific actions—big or small—that we can do to be a role model and hero in our neighborhood, school, or community.
(Encourage students to consider ideas within their families, school community and especially among their peers, sports teams and general community.)

Journal Writing Option:

Write about someone you know—or know of—who you think is a hero and explain why.

Extended Activity:

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Assign each group an example scenario from the list below or any other scenarios you determine:

- A younger student falls off their bike and they're crying.
- A classmate is being left out of a game at recess.
- You notice smoke coming from a neighbor's garage and no one is around.
- A friend is struggling with school work but is too shy to ask for help.
- You hear a child yelling for help on your way home from school.
- You find a lost dog wandering your street.
- An elderly neighbor is having trouble lifting their groceries out of their car and into their home.

Each group will discuss their scenario and answer these questions:

- What is the first thing you should do in this situation?
- What virtues are you living out in your action?
- How would you overcome fear, uncertainty or hesitation?

After discussing, groups will present their scenario and responses to the class by either acting it out, with a poster, or just explaining. Then reflect as a class on how actions, big or small, can enable anyone to be a hero in their community by being a role model in living out good and noble qualities.

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