

Positive+Parent™ Newsletter

Where the science of positive psychology+ meets the art of parenting™

Shaya Kass, PhD

www.PositiveParentPlus.com

DO YOU WANT TO RAISE A COURAGEOUS CHILD?

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. -Ambrose Redmoon

Courage is certainly a character trait that we want in ourselves and in our children. But what makes someone courageous? How can we foster courage? And, perhaps most important, Can we even agree on an answer to “What is courage?”

As Redmoon tells us, courage does not mean that we have no fear. In fact, quite the opposite, if you have no fear, you have nothing to overcome so you don't need courage. You can only be courageous when you have fear and you figure out a way to overcome the fear and do what needs to be done anyway.

This tells us that there are as many kinds of courage as there are fear. To help your child be courageous, you have to find out what they fear.

A child who is afraid to feel foolish if they try to make a goal and miss, will build courage by trying to make a goal that is “iffy”. A child who is afraid that his or her classmates will laugh at them if they get up in front of the class shows courage by making that speech in front of the class.

Now one might say that you can live your whole life without these forms of courage and you can still be happy. After all, many people have never made a

goal in soccer and I have seen that as many as 75% of people have a fear of public speaking.

But think, for a moment, about the courage of Rosa Parks, or the courage of Gandhi. Or for a more modern example, think about the courage of the many dissidents in China or Iran who are jailed for speaking their views in public.

Does your child have the courage to ignore ridicule if a classmate is being treated poorly? Does your child have the courage to speak their mind if all their friends will disagree? Being courageous is important if it means that a victim will be saved.

The way to become courageous is by doing courageous things. Talk to your child about what they fear and about overcoming those fears. Talk to your child about doing the right thing even if it means others may not agree with you.

Another way to teach courage is by talking to your child about situations in which you overcame

fear. Perhaps it was a fear of public speaking. Perhaps it was a fear of asking for a raise.

When children get to practice courage and are taught the value of courage, they will learn to be courageous. This is an important skill and value in life.

And by sharing their values, you will create a better relationship with them and help them to become great kids and great people!

