

WHAT WORD COMES TO YOUR MIND?

Look at the partial word below. Notice the first word, thought, image, memory or feeling that appears before you try to work out the intended answer.

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What came to mind first?

What did your response make you think or feel?

NOW REVEAL THE WORD

COURAGE

Courage is often pictured as confidence or fearlessness, but courage can exist while fear is very much present. It may be speaking, leaving, staying, asking, trying, resting, setting a boundary or admitting that something is difficult.

This reflection is about your definition of courage - not somebody else's expectation of what you should be able to do.

WHAT DOES COURAGE LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

Courage is personal. The same action can feel straightforward to one person and enormously demanding to another. Context, history, safety, confidence, capacity and support all matter.

A time I showed courage, even if nobody else noticed, was...

Something I am frightened of facing is...

I feel pressured to be 'brave' when...

I find courage easier to access when...

Courage is not the absence of fear

Feeling afraid does not automatically mean you are weak or incapable. Fear can contain information about risk, uncertainty, previous experiences or what matters to you. Courage may mean listening to that information and then deciding what response is right for you.

You do not have to prove your courage

Taking unnecessary risks, tolerating harm or pushing beyond your capacity is not a requirement for being courageous. Sometimes the courageous response is to stop, seek support, change direction or say that something is not safe for you.

COURAGE IN SMALL STEPS

Big changes are often built from smaller acts that are easier to repeat. Think about courage as a direction rather than a dramatic performance.

Something that matters enough for me to move towards is...

The smallest courageous step I could take is...

Before I take that step, I may need...

A courageous boundary could sound like...

If fear shows up, I want to remind myself...

A courage experiment

Choose one small action that matters to you and is reasonably safe. Before you do it, rate how difficult it feels from 0 to 10. Afterwards, notice what actually happened, what helped and what you learned. The aim is not to prove that fear was wrong; it is to gather information and recognise your effort.

Courage can include support

Doing something with another person, asking for an adjustment, preparing carefully or breaking a task into smaller stages does not make the action less courageous. Support can make meaningful action more accessible.

A MESSAGE FROM MAGGIE

I think we sometimes misunderstand courage. We notice the big visible moments and miss the quiet ones: getting out of bed on a difficult day, telling somebody the truth, asking for help, attending an appointment, saying no, or trying again after something has gone badly.

Courage does not mean you have to feel confident first. You may feel frightened, uncertain or shaky and still choose a step that matters to you.

I also do not want courage to become another demand. You do not have to keep pushing through everything to prove that you are strong. Rest, boundaries, changing your mind and protecting yourself can all require courage too.

Look for the courage you may already be showing. It may be much closer than you think.

Maggie Learoyd MNCPS - Space to Breathe Therapy

THERAPEUTIC CONTEXT & FURTHER READING

ACT explores willingness to experience difficult internal states while taking action connected with personal values. Person-centred therapy supports autonomy and personal meaning rather than prescribing what courage should look like. Gradual behavioural approaches can also help people learn through manageable, supported experiences rather than overwhelming leaps.

Suggested reading: Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*; Russ Harris, *The Confidence Gap*; Susan David, *Emotional Agility*; Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*.

This resource is for reflection and psychoeducation. It is not a diagnostic tool or a substitute for individual medical or mental-health care. Safety should take priority over pressure to be brave.