DEMONSTRATING COURAGE

BE SMART: FACE YOUR FEARS
ED U. GATOR STANDS UP TO A BULLY

OLYMPIC HEROES
Olympic athletes are very brave, don’t you think? They train incredibly hard for many years to be good enough to participate in the Olympics. They compete against the greatest athletes in the entire world! Think for a moment about an Olympic diver. She slowly climbs up all those steps to the high dive and positions herself. Down below there are thousands of people watching and waiting anxiously, including her friends and family. Millions of other people are glued to their television sets and radios around the world. She must dive perfectly to get a gold medal. Her teammates and her country are depending on her. It takes a lot of courage to do that, right? But do you think she’s scared? Absolutely! But because she’s so courageous, she’ll try to overcome her fears and do the best that she can do.

Think about a firefighter when an alarm sounds and the bell rings at the fire station. She gets into her special clothes and her special boots and helmet and she finds her place on the firetruck. She and the other firefighters race to the scene of the fire! An office tower is engulfed in flames, and she has to venture into that burning building to fight those flames. The people inside are counting on her to save their lives! She’d have to be unbelievably brave to do that, right? Do you think she’s scared? Definitely! But because she’s so courageous, she’ll try to overcome her fears and do the best that she can do.

That’s what courage is all about. Trying to do the best that you can do, even when you’re afraid. But you know something else about courage? Courage means being smart and making the right choices. The Olympic diver and the firefighter are specially trained to do their jobs. They’ve practiced what they do for many years. If you had never gone swimming, you wouldn’t dive off a fifty foot diving board, would you? That’s not bravery, that’s called not being smart! Would you run into a burning building without protective equipment, and without knowing what you’re doing? That’s not courage; that’s not using your brains!

Courage is trying hard and doing the right thing. If you try to do the best you can all the time, and make the right choices every day, you’ll be a hero, too!

**VOCABULARY:**
- Train: to prepare for something by practicing.
- Participate: to join with others in an activity.
- Compete: to try hard to outdo others at a task or contest.
- Engulfed: surrounded.
- Venture: to put yourself at risk.

**ACTIVITY:**
Firefighters and athletes are very brave. Many other people do courageous things every day. Can you think of someone you know who is brave? Also, what did you do last that took a lot of courage? Were you scared to do it? But you did it anyway? Well, great for you!
Hi friends. Ed here. Boy, I had a close call this week. I was walking home from school when I saw a big gator talking to a couple of younger crocs. When I got closer, I realized the gator was Chuckey Croaker, the meanest guy in the whole school! Everybody’s afraid of him, even the adults! And here was mean old Chuck, pushing two little guys around and shouting at them. Even from a distance I could tell they were really scared.

Well, to tell you the truth, I was pretty scared, too! I knew it wasn’t right for Chuckey to be bullying those younger kids, but I was afraid to tell him. I was sure he’d beat me to a pulp! I thought for a second about turning around and going home another way. But that wasn’t right. Who was going to stand up for the little guys? I looked to see if anyone else was around to help, but there wasn’t.

Suddenly, Chuckey pushed the smallest one really hard, and he fell into a bush. That did it! I walked right up to him, gulped, and said, “You better leave them alone right now!”

Chuckey whirled around and glared at me with those mean old eyes. “Who’s gonna make me?” he growled, gnashing his crooked teeth.

“Me!” I said, barely believing my own words. Yikes, I was in deep trouble now!

Then Chuckey said, “OH YEAH?” And ol’ Ed here said, “YEAH!” I was doing my best to cover up how scared I really was. “Why don’t you pick on somebody your own size?” I told him.

“Like you?” he said.

So I said “YEAH!” again.

Then a funny thing happened. Chuckey backed off. He picked up his schoolbag and started walking down the street. WHHEW! I thought. As he was leaving he said, “I’m not done with you yet, tough guy.”

But you know what I think? He was just blowing off steam. I don’t think anybody’s ever stood up to old Chuckey before. So I walked the two younger crocs home. They were still shaking from their frightening encounter. I was still shaking a little bit myself! It took every bit of courage I had to tell Chuckey to back off, but standing up for those little guys was the right thing to do!

QUESTIONS

1) What made Chuckey Croaker the meanest guy in school?
2) Why did Ed have such a hard time deciding what to do?
3) Was Ed afraid to stand up to the Croaker?
4) Why did he do it, even when he was scared?
5) What happened when Ed stood up to Chuckey?
6) How did “doing the right thing” make Ed courageous?
FACE YOUR FEARS WITH COURAGE!

Directions: Everyone’s afraid of something. Some people are afraid of talking in front of a group, meeting new people, or going someplace they’ve never been before. Some folks are afraid of bugs, big dogs or loud noises! Make a list of the things you used to be afraid of, but you’re not scared of anymore. Then make a list of those things that still frighten you. Admitting that you’re afraid of something is a courageous thing to do!

THE FEAR CONQUEROR!

Directions: Imagine yourself heading out in the morning to overcome your greatest fear. You might need some special clothes, special equipment or a special companion to help you complete your brave task. Draw a picture of yourself and what you would look like as THE FEAR CONQUEROR!
IN THE NEWSPAPER

Directions: The paper is filled with people doing courageous things. We hear a lot about police officers, firefighters and soldiers doing brave things. But many other people demonstrate courage everyday. Look through the paper with an adult and find a story about courage. Read it together, cut out the picture and paste or tape it in the space below. In a few sentences, tell about what happened in your own words.

A 'COURAGE TO DO WHAT’S RIGHT' CERTIFICATE

Directions: Think of something you’ve done that was scary, but was the right thing to do. You probably tried hard to overcome your fear and do the best that you could. Write about it in the spaces on the certificate at right. Then color it in, cut it out and hang it up. You deserve it!
Nathan was new in school and didn’t have many friends. So when Russ and Thomas, two of the most popular boys in school, asked him to join them on a secret adventure one afternoon he jumped at the chance.

The three boys walked a mile and a half through thick woods until they finally reached a big field. Nathan followed the boys as they raced through the tall grass. At the end of the field was a cliff, Cooger’s Cliff. Standing near the edge, Nathan could see huge jagged rocks below, and he could hear rushing water. There were signs posted everywhere that said “DANGER: DO NOT GO BEYOND THIS POINT.” He stepped back a few feet just to be safe.

“Are you ready?” asked Thomas.

“Ready for what?” said Nathan.

“To climb down the cliff, silly,” said Russ.

“But all those signs say it’s not safe to go,” said Nathan.

“Don’t be such a scaredy cat,” said Russ, “We’ve done it a hundred times.”

Nathan thought about it for a minute. He wanted to be Russ and Thomas’ friend, but he was afraid to climb down Cooger’s Cliff.

“I...I don’t think so,” decided Nathan.

“Oh, you might as well come,” said Russ.

“No way,” said Thomas. “You can’t make us go down there.”

Nathan knew they wouldn’t change their minds, so he picked up his backpack and started back across the field. He wondered whether he had made the right choice by not going down the cliff. Suddenly he heard a scream. Then he heard Russ calling for help. Nathan ran back to the edge of the cliff. He could hear Russ, but he couldn’t see either boy below.

“What happened?” he yelled down.

“Thomas slipped and landed head first on a rock!” cried Russ.

“Go get help!”

So Nathan ran as fast as he could all the way back to school. There he found a teacher, Mr. Carson, who called the police. By the time Nathan and Mr. Carson got back to Cooger’s Cliff, rescue workers were hoisting the two boys up from below. Thomas had a broken arm and a big purple bruise on his forehead.

“What were you boys thinking?” the teacher asked Nathan. “Didn’t you read the signs?” Nathan explained how he had been afraid to climb down the cliff.

“Well, that was a smart choice,” said Mr. Carson, “and a brave one. It saved your friends’ lives. Nobody would have heard them screaming all the way out here.”

Suddenly, Nathan was the most famous boy in the county. A national television show even did a story on the “Rescue at Cooger’s Cliff.” The governor of the state came to school and gave Nathan a special award for bravery. Walking home that day, Nathan laughed to himself. The funny thing was, on the day of the accident, Nathan didn’t feel very brave. But he realized now how courageous it was just to do the right thing.
The history of the Olympic games is filled with incredible stories of courageous men and women who overcame fantastic odds to succeed. Many recovered from serious illnesses or injuries to compete against the greatest athletes in the world. In the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, a gymnast named Kerri Strugg performed her final jump on the vault with a badly hurt leg. The score on that nearly perfect vault gave her team a first place finish and a gold medal. Strugg was in so much pain, two people had to carry her to the award ceremony. But it was very important to Strugg to be present with her American teammates.

In 1993, an accomplished diver named Scott Donie stood frozen in fear on a diving board in the middle of a competition. As hard as he tried, he couldn’t bring himself to do a dive he had done successfully hundreds of times before. Through arduous training he overcame that fear, and went on to win many important diving awards and to compete in the 1996 Olympics.

A bicyclist named Rebecca Twigg won a championship race and set a new world record with a broken collarbone! Twigg’s ability to overcome her accident is due to her unbelievable strength and courage, and her dedication to training. For years she has ridden her bicycle three to six hours a day, several days a week!

These courageous 1996 Olympians may have been inspired by Wilma Rudolf, one of the fastest women and greatest competitors who ever lived. Rudolf was born in Tennessee, and was one of twenty-two children! As a child, she had polio, scarlet fever and double pneumonia. As a result of the scarlet fever, Rudolf lost the use of one of her legs, and was required to wear a leg brace. Her mother, brothers and sisters gave her physical therapy every day. By age 11 she was playing basketball and at 16 she qualified for the Olympics. At the Rome Olympic games in 1960, Rudolf won three gold medals and matched a previous world record. Without courage, and without a strong belief in their own abilities, these Olympic heroes might never have accomplished their outstanding feats!

**VOCABULARY:**
- Ceremony: an important occasion.
- Accomplished: to do something successfully.
- Competition: a contest of some kind.
- Arduous: demanding a lot of effort.
- Dedication: devotion to something.
-Feat: an achievement that shows great courage or skill.
TIPS

1) The words “courage” and “bravery” are usually reserved for people who have done remarkable things. It’s important to recognize what’s brave and courageous in everyday situations. Telling the truth is courageous, especially when the truth hurts or when a punishment is sure to follow. It’s also courageous to “do the right thing”, especially when peer pressure makes “the right thing” an unpopular choice.

2) Kids today are bombarded with images of superheroes like Batman, Superman and Power Rangers. These “fantasy” figures battle entire armies of bad guys, jump off buildings, fly, and lift objects ten times their size. Some children have a tough time separating reality and fantasy. Try to help your child understand that being brave is also being safe and smart, and avoiding dangerous and reckless situations.

3) You may believe your child is “too old” to be afraid of whatever it is that gives him/her the willies. Belittling your child by calling those fears “silly” or “childish” probably won’t help remove the fear. Work with your child patiently to overcome this fear. If your child realizes you’re there for support and guidance, it will help him/her regain confidence and courage.

4) Children frequently have the perception that adults are all-powerful and fearless. Make sure your child knows there’s nothing wrong with being afraid. Everyone has experienced fear at some time in their lives. It might help your child deal with his/her insecurity if you could “reveal” something that scared, or still scares you. Then perhaps you could explain the steps you’ve taken to overcome your fear.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Often, people are most afraid of things they don’t really understand. It might help to explore in depth a subject that frightens your child. Take a trip to the library and research and read together as much as you can about this subject. The library or the local video store may have a good age-appropriate movie that relates to this subject. Finally, (now that you’re experts on the subject!) it might be fun to create a fictional story where the main character confronts, and somehow overcomes this fear.

RESOURCES


FAMILY PLEDGE CARD

Our family has completed the Family Page together.

______________________________
Child’s name

Family members:

__________________    __________________
__________________    __________________

School: _________________________

Teacher/grade: _________________________

CREDITS

Shirley Dunegan McElroy — Project: Solution Coordinator

Brian Hinchman — Graphic Designer

Cory Fausz — Copy Editor

Ned Andrew Solomon — Writer

Jim Chapman — Illustrator

For more information about Project: Solution, call 726-8918 or 1-800-351-1227, ext. 8033 or 8918.