Everyday Courage for School Leaders
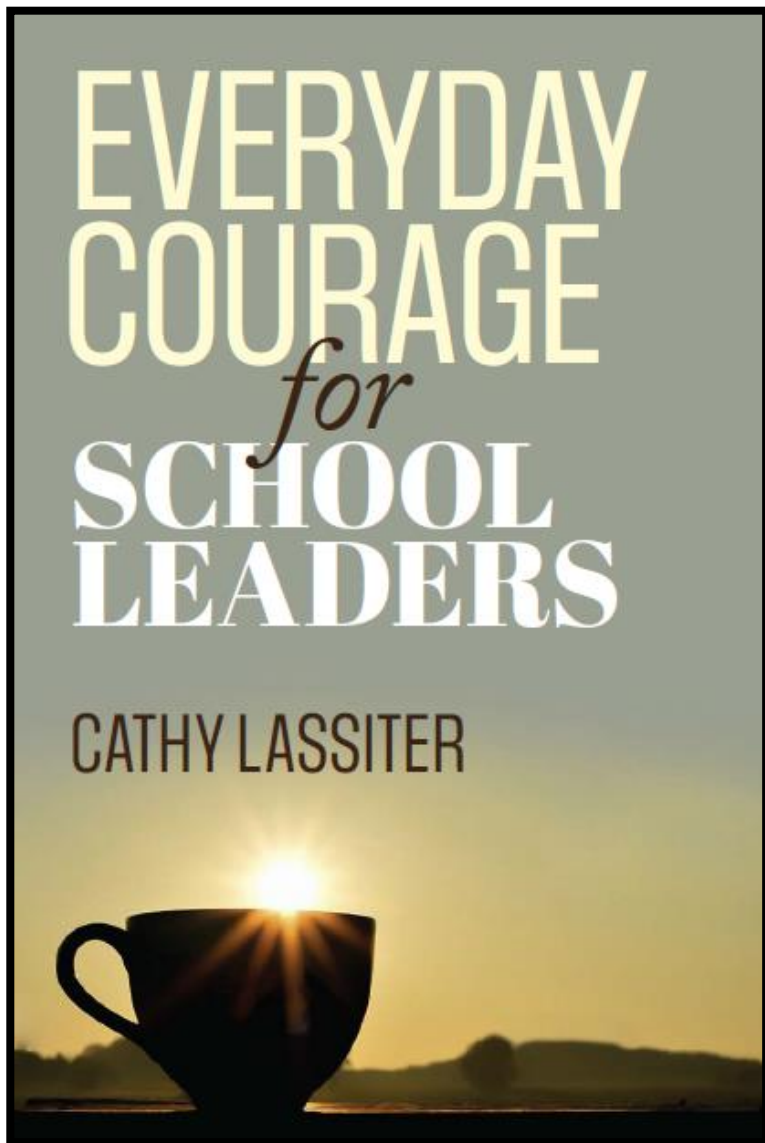
Cathy J. Lassiter, Ed.D.

Greater Cleveland School Superintendents' Association

January 13, 2020

@cathy_lassiter

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EVERYDAY COURAGE for SCHOOL LEADERS

CATHY LASSITER

Leading from a Courageous Mindset

https://resources.corwin.com/everydaycourage

Like a daily cup of coffee….

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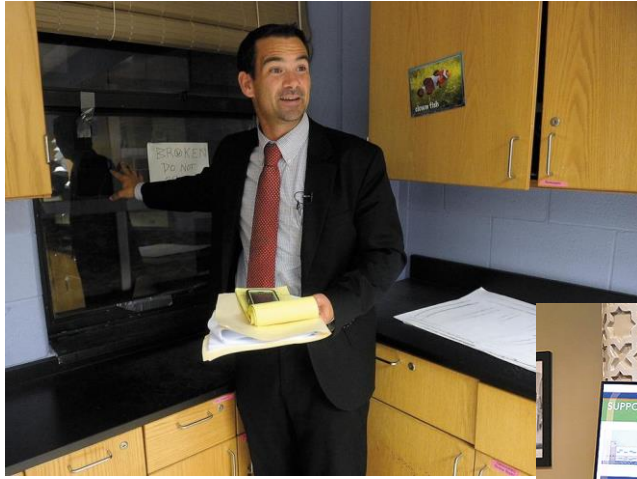
Guiding Principles

- Courage is in all of us
- School leaders must activate courage to take risks & innovate
- Nothing changes, if nothing changes

Why courage matters for school leaders

Tommy Thompson, New London High, CT

Ashton Clemmons, Brooks Global, NC

Emily Paul, Good Shepard Catholic, LA

Walter Perez, Austin Elementary, TX

Stan Law, Arlington High, IN

Stan Law, Arlington High, Indianapolis, IN

Arlington High first came to notoriety in 2012 when it was placed on Indiana's list of 10 "drop-out factories" after 6 consecutive years of being rated an "F" school by the state as a result of abysmal student performance and unacceptably low graduation rates.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS 2015

Standard 1. Mission, Vision, & Core Values Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.	**Standard 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel** Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
Standard 2. Ethics & Professional Norms Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	**Standard 7. Professional Community for Teachers & Staff** Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
Standard 3. Equity & Cultural Responsiveness Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	**Standard 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families & Community** Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
Standard 4. Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	**Standard 9. Operations & Management** Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
Standard 5. Community of Care & Support for Students Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.	**Standard 10. School Improvement** Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

EC p. 37-38

Standard 1

Element

Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the school's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.

Standard 3

Element

Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.
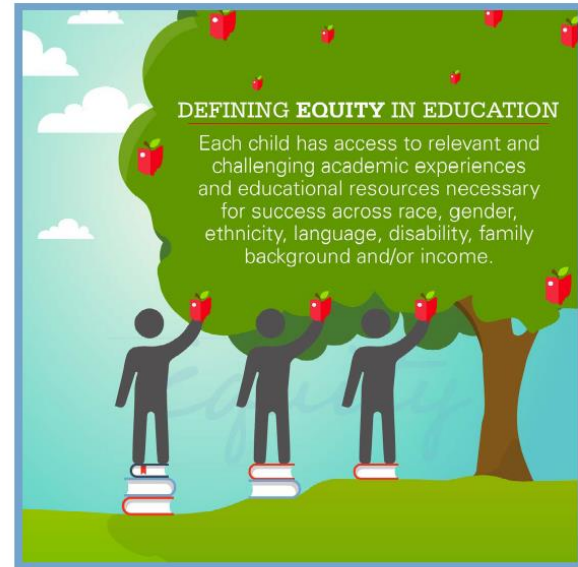
Standard 10

Element 82

Manage uncertainty, risk, competing initiatives, and politics of change with courage and perseverance, providing support and encouragement, and openly communicating the need for, process for, and outcomes of improvement efforts.

Three Core Principles

EQUITY: Ohio's greatest education challenge remains equity in education achievem[ent] for each child. The path to equity begins with a deep understanding of the history of discrimination and bias and how it has come to impact current society. This plan renews Ohio's commitment to creating the learning conditions that ensure each child acquires the knowledge and skills across all four equal learning domains[6] to be successful.

DEFINING **EQUITY** IN EDUCATION

Each child has access to relevant and challenging academic experiences and educational resources necessary for success across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background and/or income.

PARTNERSHIPS: Everyone, not just those in schools, shares the responsibilit[y] of preparing children for successful futures. The most important partners are parents and caregivers, who have the greatest impact on a child's development. Other critical partners include educators, institutions of higher education, business, philanthropy, employers, libraries, social service organizations, community members, health care providers, behavioral health experts and many more. Put simply, partnerships transform the education experience.

QUALITY SCHOOLS: Schools are an important destination where many individuals and factors come together to serve the student, including school leaders, teachers, curriculum, instruction, **student supports**, data analysis and more. Research sho[ws] that school leaders have the greatest hand in defining a school's culture and climate, whic[h] significantly affect student learning.[7] A quality school is a place where parents, caregivers community partners and others interact for the benefit of students. All schools—public an[d] private—play important roles in building Ohio's future.

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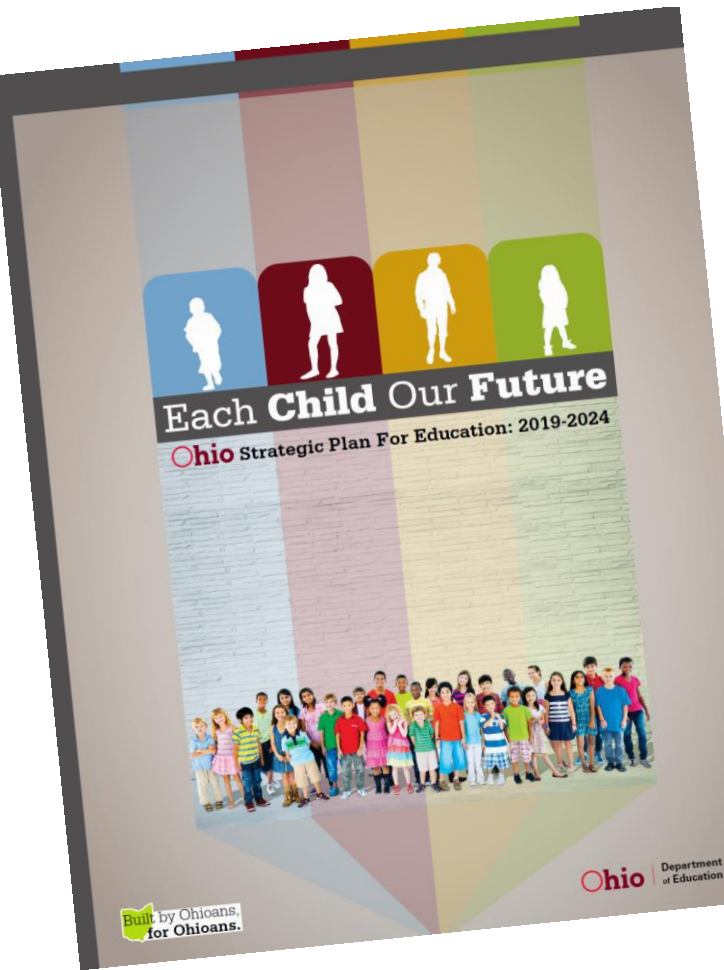
[6] Refer to page 12 for a detailed description of the four equal learning domains.

[7] Macneil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. International Journal of Leadership in Education, 12(1), 73-84. doi:10.1080/13603120701576241

Learning Activity

Table Discuss

What can we do at the district level to support and build courageous leaders as they grapple with the decisions they are being call upon to make?

Disparities in Discipline

The Effect of School Discipline on Offending Across Time

Thomas J. Mowen, John J. Brent & John H. Boman IV

Yale Child Study Center

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?

Walter S. Gilliam, PhD
Angela N. Maupin, PhD
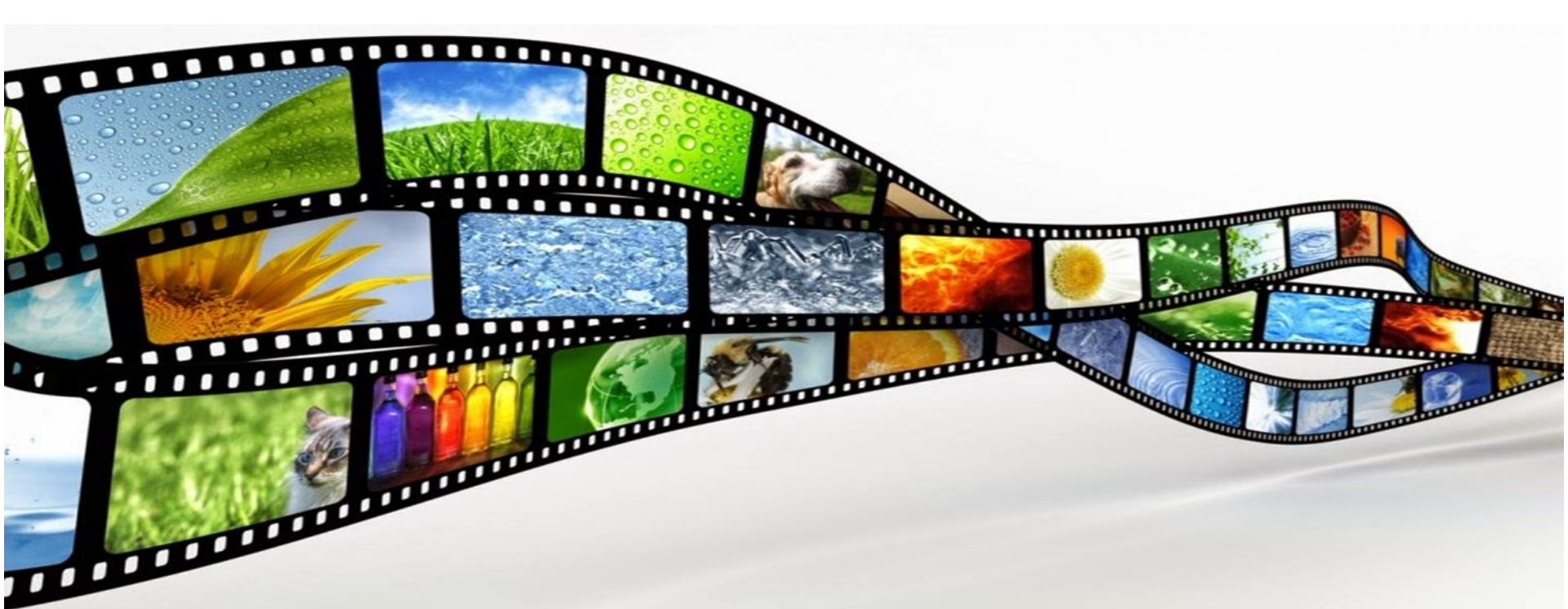Chin R. Reyes, PhD
Maria Accavitti, BS
Frederick Shic, PhD

When does implicit bias show up in schools?

NPR Summary of the Yale Study Methodology and Findings

"The tendency to base classroom observation on the gender and race of the child may explain in part why those children are more frequently identified as misbehaving and hence why there is a racial disparity in discipline."

Do pre-K educators expect black children, especially black boys, to misbehave?

Black children make up only 19% of preschool enrollment...

19%

but comprise 47% of preschoolers suspended one or more times.

47%
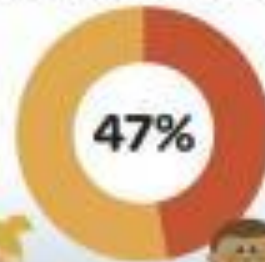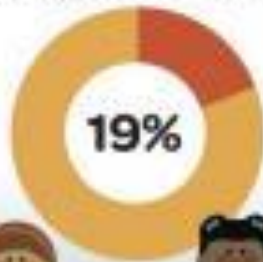
Black preschoolers are 3.6x as likely to receive one or more suspensions relative to whites.

3.6x

This near 30% point disparity begins in Pre K and continues throughout K-12 to significantly impact the success of African-American male students in school.

Academic Disparities
Selective Colleges, AP & Gifted Programs

Learning Activity:

Table Discussion

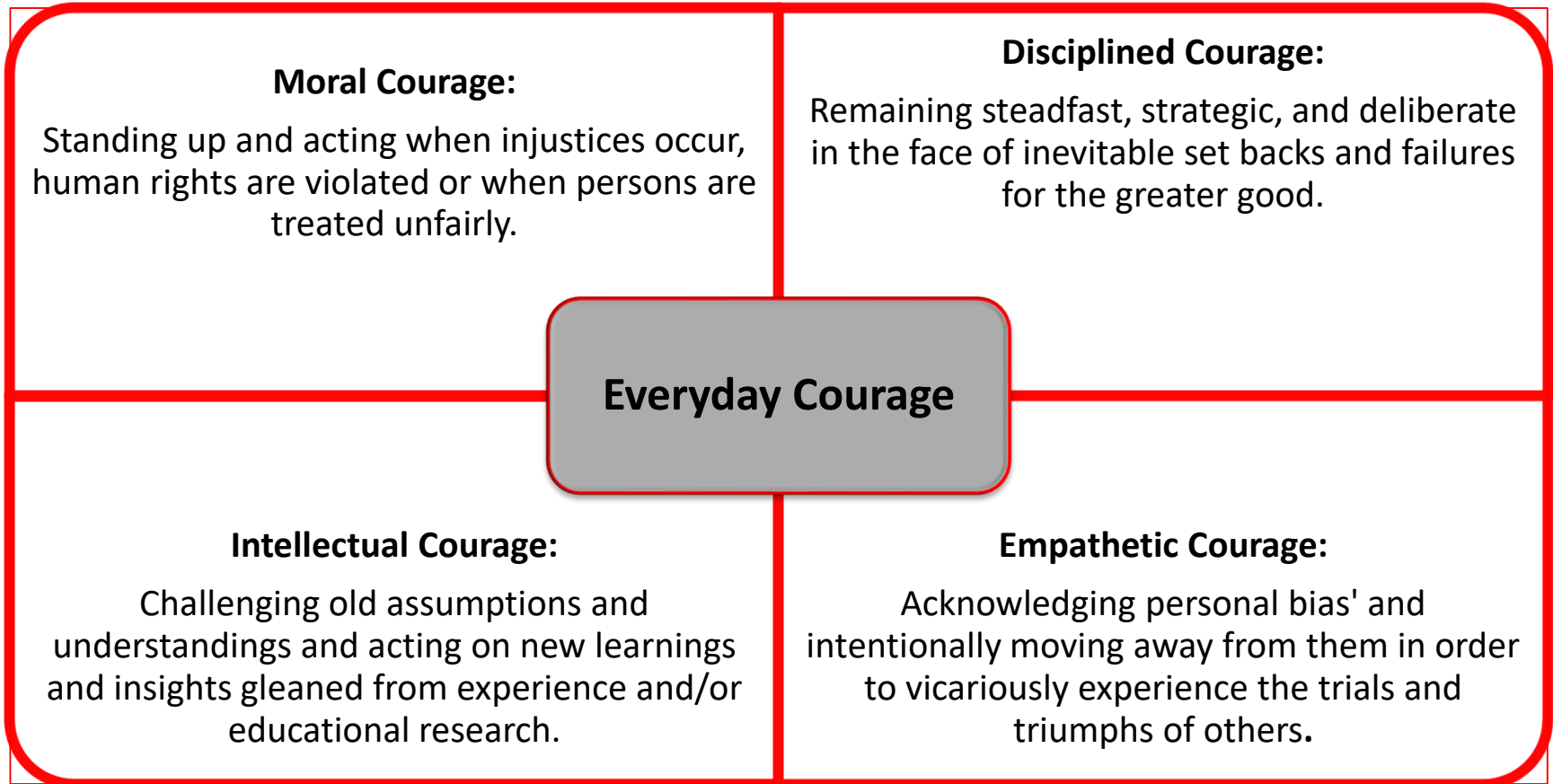What kind(s) of everyday courage do you need most in your work?

There are many kinds of courage. Awesome kinds. And everyday kinds.

cour·age (kûr'ij)
Strength of mind and spirit t¹
bravery.

Still, courage is courage — whatever kind.

Kinds of Courage for School Leaders

Different Kinds of Courage

Moral Courage:

Standing up and acting when injustices occur, human rights are violated or when persons are treated unfairly.

Disciplined Courage:

Remaining steadfast, strategic, and deliberate in the face of inevitable set backs and failures for the greater good.

Everyday Courage

Intellectual Courage:

Challenging old assumptions and understandings and acting on new learnings and insights gleaned from experience and/or educational research.

Empathetic Courage:

Acknowledging personal bias' and intentionally moving away from them in order to vicariously experience the trials and triumphs of others.

Does everyone have courage?

2 Studies

Research Questions

- **Can we train our brain to act courageously?**
- **Can courage be leveraged to improve organizational performance?**

Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, Israel

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Research

Measure fear and document courage in the brain.

Snakes in an MRI Machine

Weizmann Institute of Science

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Article

Fear Thou Not: Activity of Frontal and Temporal Circuits in Moments of Real-Life Courage

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[1]Department of Neurobiology, Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, 76100, Israel
[2]Felsenstein Medical Research Center at Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel-Aviv University, Petah Tikva 49100, Israel
[3]The Research Unit, Geha Mental Health Center, Petah Tikva 49100, Israel
*Correspondence: yadin.dudai@weizmann.ac.il
DOI 10.1016/j.neuron.2010.06.009

SUMMARY

How does the brain encode courage in a real-life fear-ful situation that demands an immediate response? In this study, volunteers who fear snakes had to bring a live snake into close proximity with their heads while their brains were scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Bringing the snake closer was associated with a dissociation between subjective fear and somatic arousal. Activity in the subgenual anterior cingulate cortex (sgACC) and the right temporal pole was positively correlated with such action. Further, activity in the sgACC was positively correlated with the level of fear upon choosing to overcome fear but not upon succumbing to it. Conversely, activity in a set of inter-related temporal lobe structures, including the amyg-dala, was attenuated as the level of fear increased when choosing to overcome fear. We propose how the internally reinforced fast representational shift, in which the courageous-response representation gains control over behavior, takes place.

INTRODUCTION

The Roman philosopher Seneca considered all humans slaves to fear (Seneca, 1969). Yet given the right circumstances, ordinary people can set themselves free of this bondage and act coura-geously. How is this achieved? To act courageously may mean in ordinary discourse anything from rescuing a child from turbu-lent waters to selecting a risky academic career. Such a broad spectrum of behaviors hence spans different situations and time intervals. However, the wide spectrum of courageous behaviors does have a common denominator, which is the performance of voluntary action opposed to that promoted by ongoing fear (Rachman, 1984, 1990, 2004a). This suggests that rather different manifestations of courage might share some core brain mechanisms. It is noteworthy that courage as here conceived focuses on action (in spite of fearfulness) that is observed in the general population rather than on an excep-tional trait (fearlessness). Thus, by gauging properly defined

actions of either overcoming fear or succumbing to it in an acute controllable fearful situation, one can render certain neural substrates of courage amenable to investigation in a brain research laboratory setting.

Because it has to do with action to overcome fear, the brain mechanisms of courage are expected to overlap with the prolific research on brain mechanisms of fear (Quirk et al., 2006), and cognitive control of emotion (Ochsner and Gross, 2005). There are, however, notable differences. Experimental extinction deals with fear condi-tioning to appreciate that a conditioned fear stimulus is not warranted any more because the original source has vanished, whereas courageous action as considered here must prompt voluntary overcoming of the fear reaction despite the on-line source of fear. And although courage involves regulated emotion, in research protocols of cognitive control of emotion, participants are commonly instructed to use particular cognitive strategies to regulate emotion, while the immediate goal of this regulation is not instrumental in generating an external outcome, nor does it affect the unfolding of the experimental protocol. In contrast, real-life courage involves contextual idiosyncratic regulation strategies leading to external out-comes that in turn influence future decisions and actions. To the best of our knowledge, to date, no functional neuroimaging studies have been reported that allow a choice between suc-cumbing to a naturalistic source of fear or overcoming it, while acting on the choice; hence, there are none that probe the brain mechanisms of swift decision and action in the face of ongoing fear.

In this study we devised a paradigm that enables induction of a sustained acute ecological fear ambience within a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner, while allowing participants instant choices between overcoming and succumb-ing to the ongoing fear and a behavioral expression of these choices. We selected a snake as the fear-eliciting stimulus because fear of snakes, often intense, is common in the general population (Agras et al., 1969). Specifically, a live snake (corn snake, *Elaphe guttata*, ~1.5 m long) or a toy bear (a control stimulus intended to evoke no fear) were secured to the top of a trolley that could travel step-wise on a conveyer belt spanning the distance between the far end of the scan room and close proximity to the participant's head within the scanner. Partici-pants were instructed that their task was to reach maximal prox-imity to the objects, while overcoming to the best of their ability
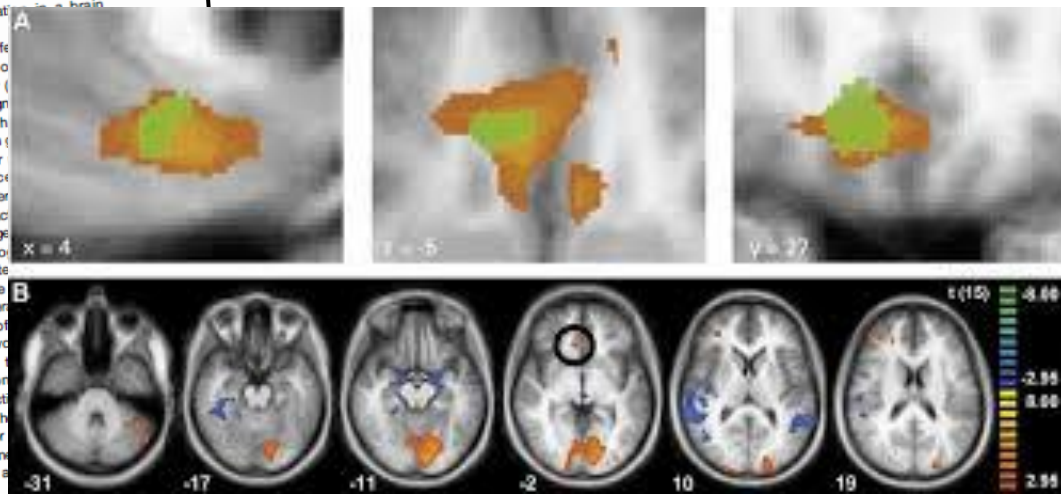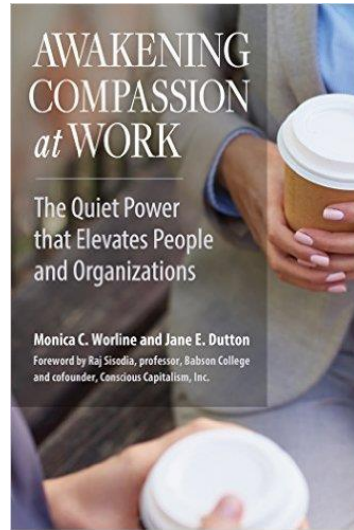
Study 1 Findings
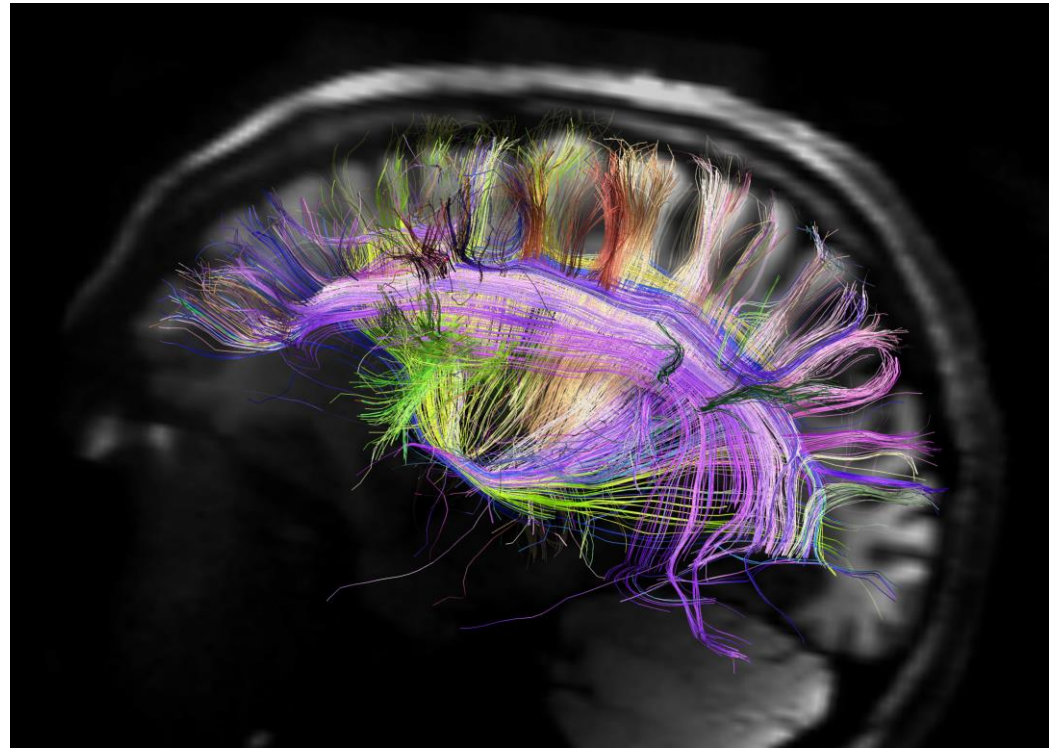
There is a courage center in the brain that is activated when we face our fears and this center serves to quiet the fear when courage activated.

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Study 2: The Role of Courage in the Workplace

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education

Worline, M.C., Wrzesniewski, A & Rafaeli, A (2002). Courage and work. Breaking routines to improve performance.
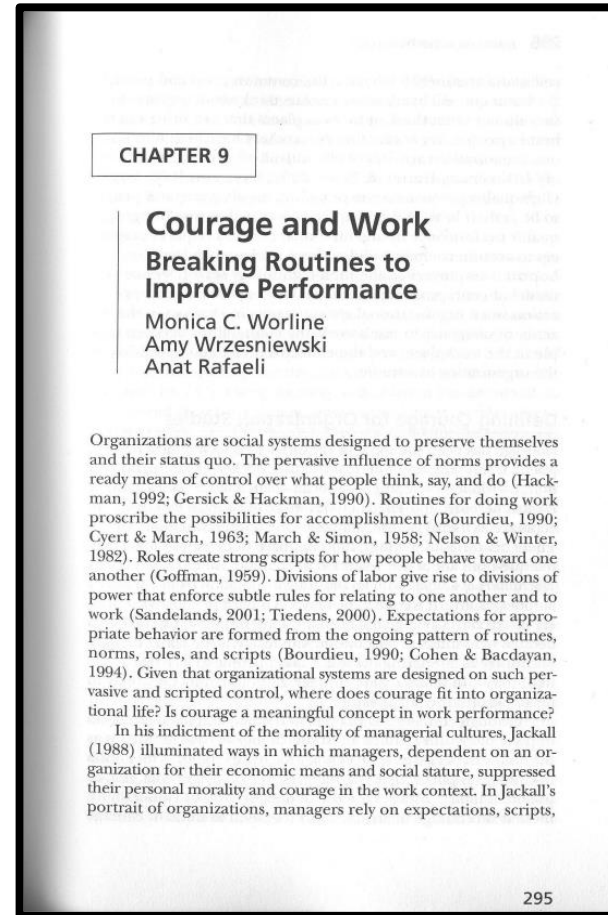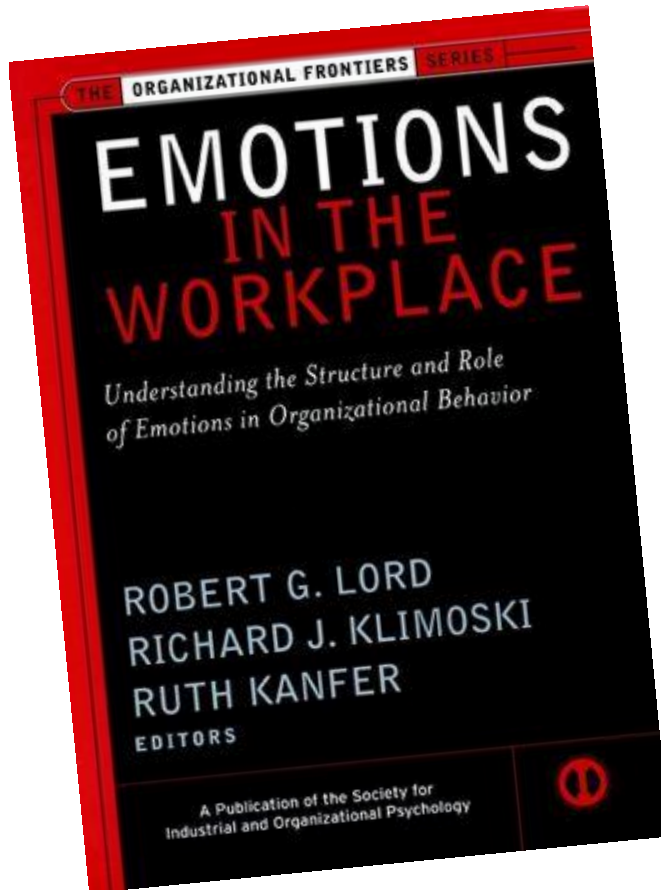
Worline, M.C., Wrzesniewski, A & Rafaeli, A (2002). Courage and work. Breaking routines to improve performance.

Study 2: Findings

- Individuals who witnessed courage had subsequent
  - **higher levels of self-efficacy,**
  - **a sense of organizational ownership,**
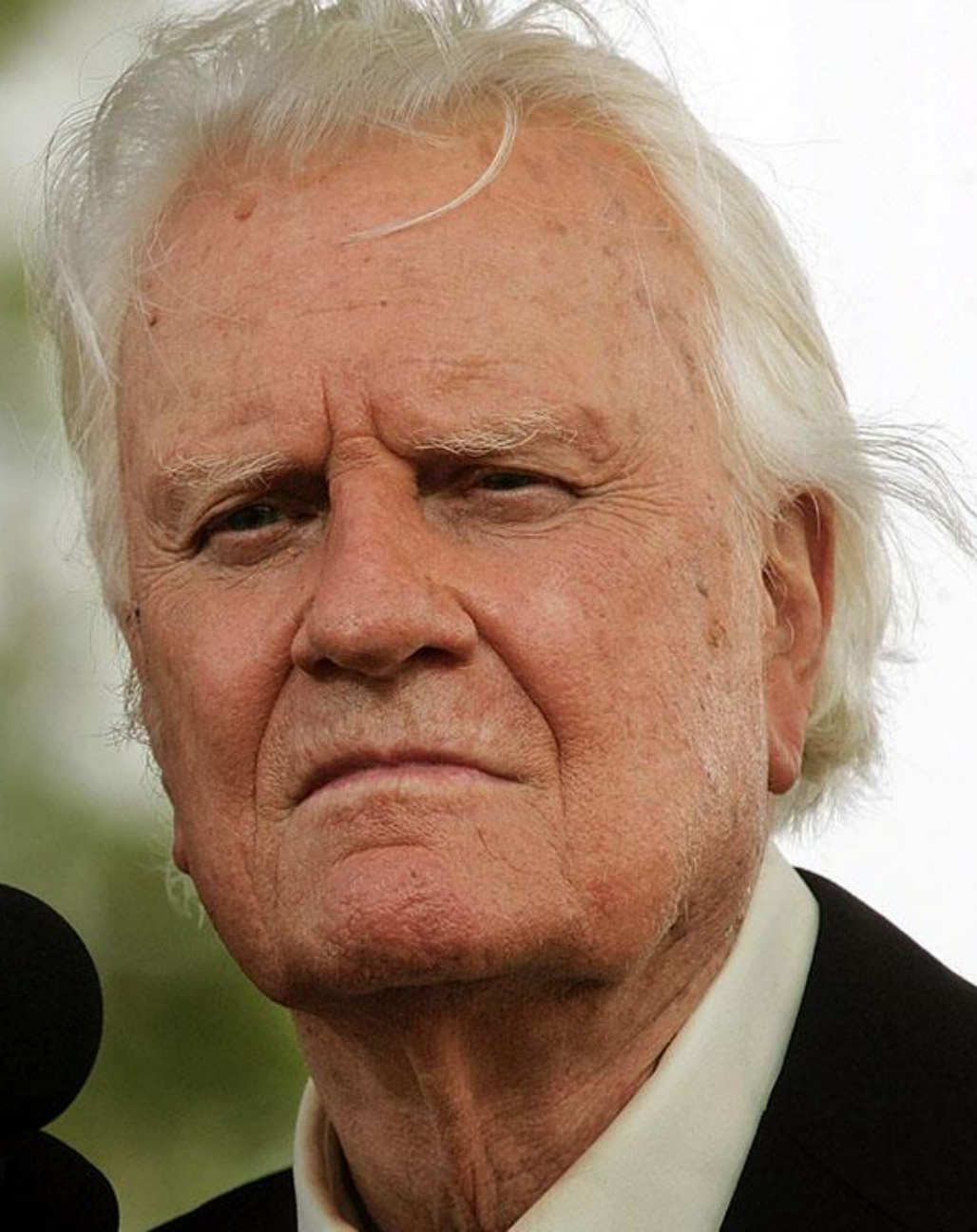 - **a willingness to be engaged in work.**

Courage at Work

- **Self-efficacy**
- **Ownership**
- **Engagement**

"Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are stiffened."

Learning Activity: Table Talk

Connect: What parts of the research and/or the quotes did you connect with?

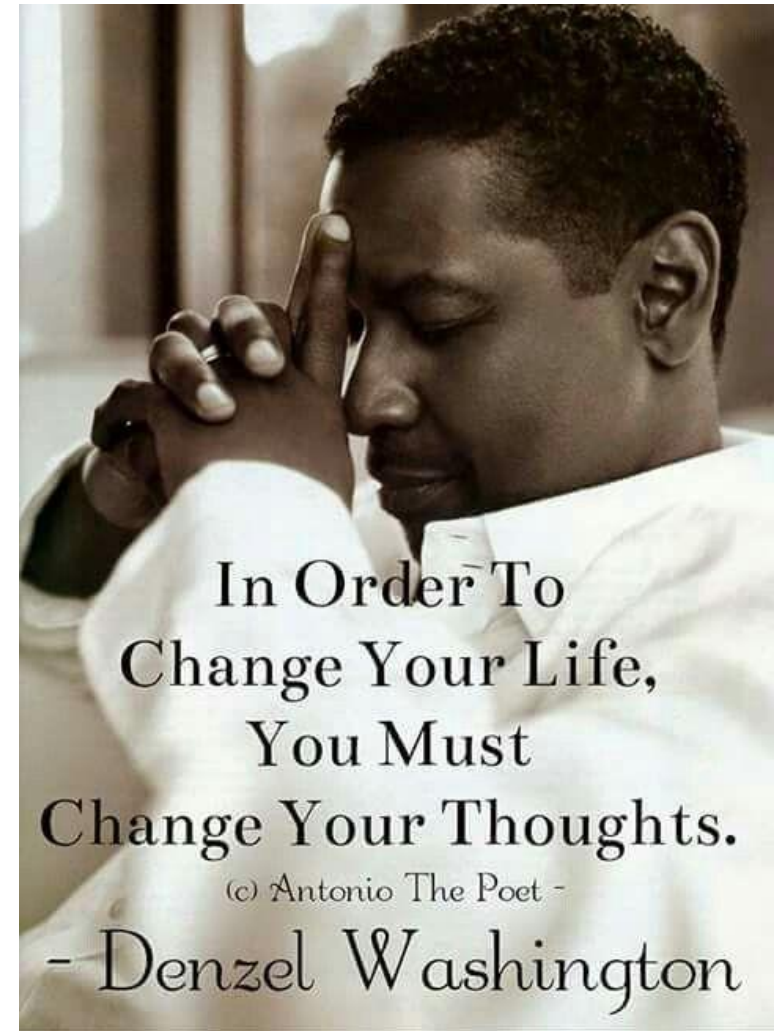**Extend:** What in the research and/or quotes extended your understanding?

Challenge: What in the research and/or quotes presents a challenge for you?

Part III: Building YOUR Courageous Mindset

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3 Keys to a Courageous Mindset

Believe in yourself without limits
Keep worry at bay
Maintain optimism

In Order To Change Your Life, You Must Change Your Thoughts.

(c) Antonio The Poet -

- Denzel Washington

1. Believe in Yourself Without Limits

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Listen to the voice of strength, confidence, power and passion.

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_____%
of self talk
is negative

Roselle, B. 2006. *Fearless Leadership: Conquering Your Fears and the Lies that Drive Them*. Leader Press. Minneapolis, MN

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95 % of self talk is negative

2. Keep worries at bay.

WORRYING DOES NOT TAKE AWAY TOMORROW'S TROUBLES: IT TAKES AWAY TODAY'S PEACE

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Excessive worrying takes away focus, causes fatigue and stress, and steals joy.

Keep Worry at Bay

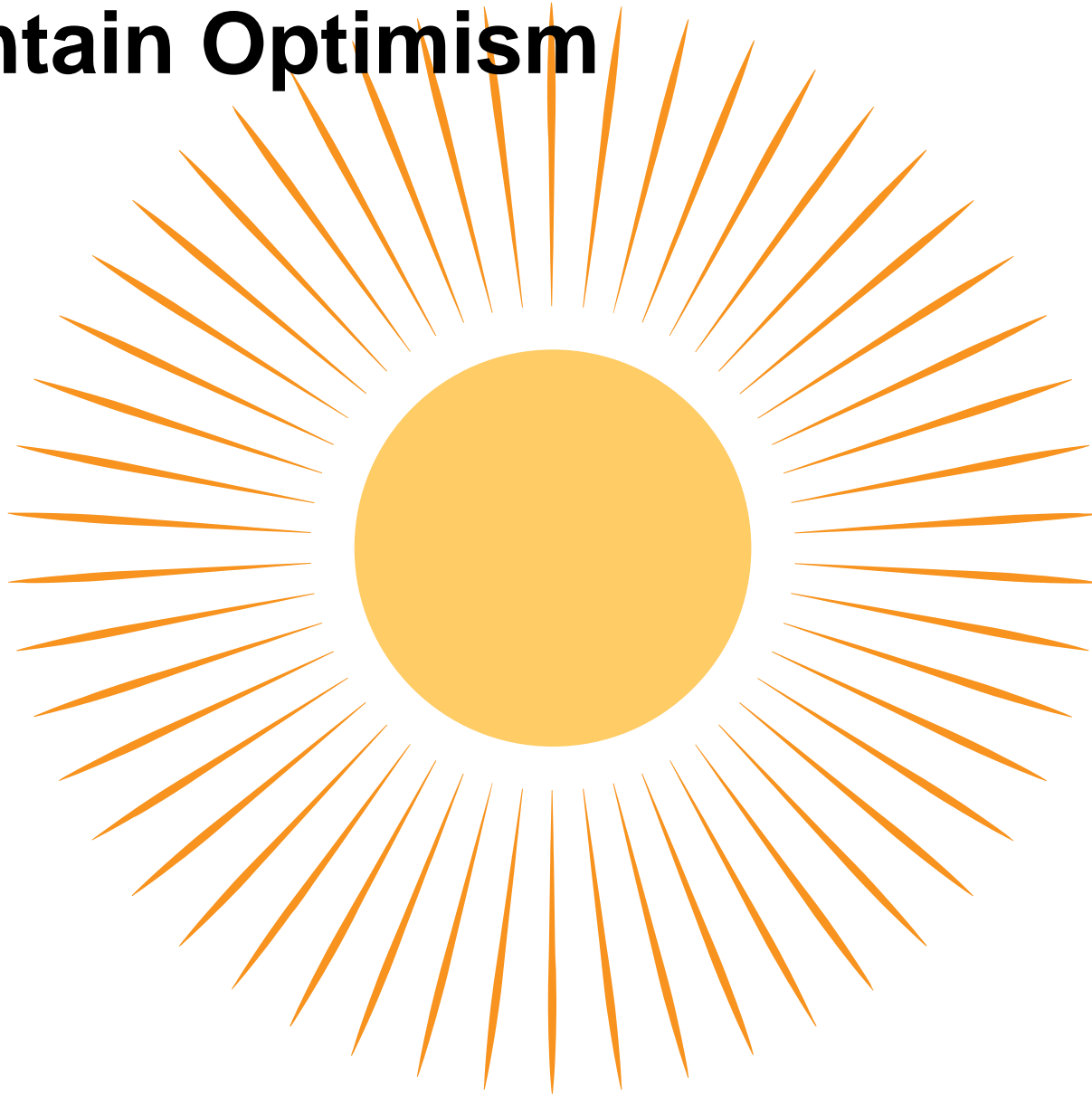| %	Worries
	Things that never actually happened
	Things from the past that could neither be changed nor otherwise influenced
	Needless worries about health
	Petty worries about unimportant things
	Worries about substantial issues
	Worries about things that could be controlled or changed

Keep Worry at Bay

%	Worries
40%	Things that never actually happened
30%	Things from the past that could neither be changed nor otherwise influenced
12%	Needless worries about health
10%	Petty worries about unimportant things
8%	Worries about substantial issues
½ of the 8% or 4%	Worries about things that could be controlled or changed

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The best antidote for worry is purposeful action toward a meaningful goal.

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3. Maintain Optimism

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"A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties."

- Harry S Truman

Optimists outperform pessimists by 50%

Seligman, M. 2006. *Learned optimism*: *How to change your mind and your life.* Random House. New York.

EC p. 134

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A tale of two sales executives

"The prospects for sales are dim because no one wears shoes here."

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A tale of two sales executives

"The prospects for sales are tremendous because no one wears shoes here!"

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Courageous Mindset

1. **Believe in yourself without limits**
2. **Keep worry at bay**
3. **Maintain optimism**

I choose to be unstoppable. I am bigger than my concerns and worries. The strength of others inspire me daily. I focus on my goal. I trust my intuition and live a courageous life.

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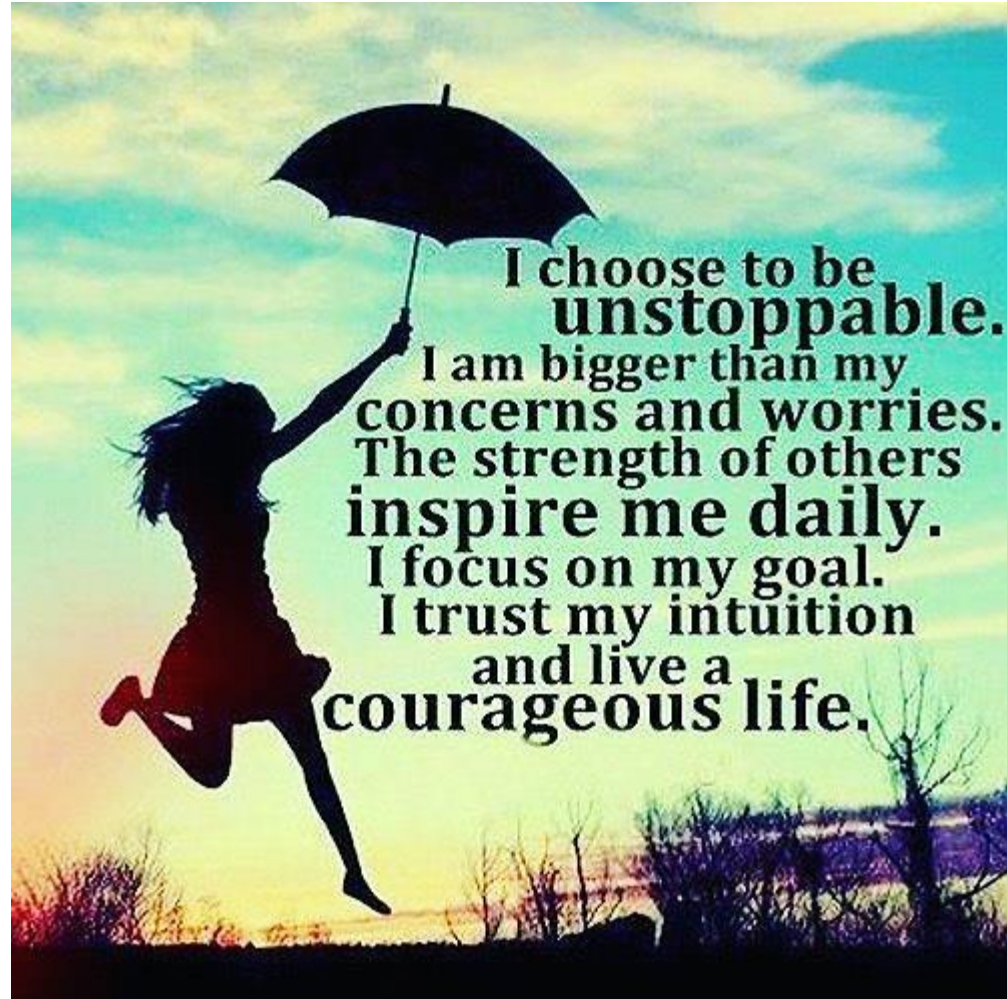
Movie Clip:
Imagine That
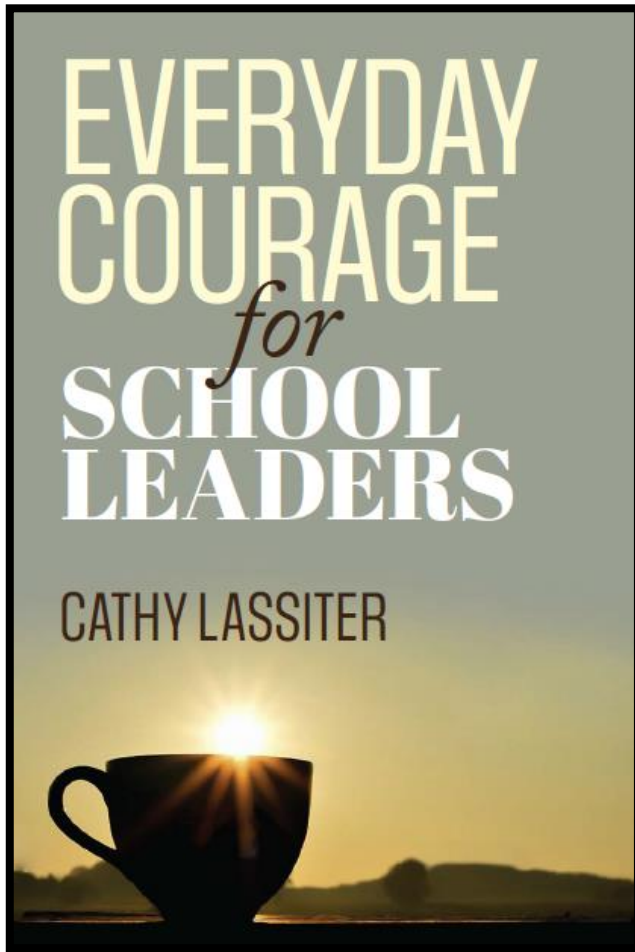
Self- Assessment
Building Trust
Personal Accountability
Risk-Taking

https://resources.corwin.com/everydaycourage

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Closure and Questions

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