**Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths**

**Tayyab Rashid, Ph.D., University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada**

**Afroze Anjum, Psych.D, Toronto District School Board, Canada**

**CORE VIRTUE: COURAGE**

**exercising will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal**

**I. Bravery [valor]:** Bravery is the capacity to take action to aid others in spite of significant risks or dangers. This strength allows people to avoid shrinking from the threats, challenges, or pain associated with attempting to do good works. Brave acts are undertaken voluntarily with full knowledge of the potential adversity involved. Brave individuals place the highest importance on higher purpose and morality, no matter what the consequences might be.

**Too much:** foolhardiness, risk taking, foolishness

**Too little:** debilitating fear

**Movies:**

1. *Milk (2008)* – A biographical film based on the life of gay rights activist and politician Harvey Milk. Movie depicts Milks’ courage to the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California.

2. *The Kite Runner (2007)* - is a moving tale of courage of two friends Amir and Hassan whose friendship flourishes in pre-Soviet invasion Kabul in mid to late 1970s. Where Hassan displays the courage and loyalty of being faithful to Amir, Amir, ultimately overcomes his inner cowardice to rescue Hassan’s son from war ravaged and Taliban ruled Afghanistan, to make things right, again.

3. *Schindler’s List* (1993) – Oskar Schindler is a German businessman who sees the opportunity of cheap labor in the plight of persecuted Jews. Over the course of the movie, however, his perspective changes and he begins to use his factory as a cover for hiding refugees. His actions cost him his fortune but save over a thousand lives.

4. *Life as a House* (2001) – An architect diagnosed with terminal cancer finally faces the most difficult parts of his life: his relationships with his estranged son and ex-wife. As he rebuilds the house that contained his most painful memories, he braves the pain and uncertainty of his past in order to build a foundation for his future, no matter how short it may be.

***Suggested Actions***

1. Resist social or peer pressure, instead choosing to act on noble values and causes in meaningful ways. For example, you can write, speak out, participate in a protest, or join an activist organization.

2. Speak up for or write about an unpopular idea in a group. Be respectful of other opinions without backing down from yours.

3. Take small, practical steps for a constructive social change. Local volunteer organizations are an excellent resource for ways to get involved.

4. Report an injustice, abuse, blatant unethical practice, or abuse of power or resources to appropriate authorities, even if the perpetrator is someone close to you. Remember the people that you are helping by preventing further injustice.

5. Protect or stand up for someone who will not otherwise stand up for him- or herself, such as a younger sibling or a battered woman. Make them feel like they can depend on you in the future.

6. Ask difficult questions that help you and others face reality. Be gentle and kind, but don’t keep questions inside merely because they are hard to express or answer.

7. Clarify your values by thinking about how best they have served you in challenging situations. Also consider ways in which your values have hindered you, and ways to change this in the future.

8. Cultivate a reputation for recognizing and appreciating brave acts that are accomplished despite challenges. Express your appreciation for other people who exhibit bravery.

9. Identify an area in which you generally shy away from confrontations. Practice the phrases, the tones, and the mannerisms that will enable you to effectively confront the situation next time.

10. Collect contemporary stories of bravery in everyday life situations. Save newspaper or magazine clippings about courageous acts.

11. Don’t be afraid to be different while still being positive. Act in ways that make you feel true to your beliefs and personality.

12. Don’t be afraid to befriend someone who is different. Think of ways that their strengths as a friend can compliment your own.