

## Unit 2 Courage

Business studies: Psychology

Reading skills: Understanding reference words;  
Understanding abstract expressions

Writing skills: Explaining key concepts

## 1 SPEAKING

a Cover the text and discuss the questions.

- 1 What do you understand by courage or a courageous person? Is it mainly a question of character, behaviour or both?
- 2 In what ways might courage be an asset in these occupations?

a nurse   a soldier   a company sales manager  
a student   an employee   a firefighter



b Without using a dictionary, try to write a definition of courage. Include some of these words to help you:

ability   fear   danger(ous)   strength   overcome   right

Then compare your answer with a dictionary definition.

c Think of a courageous person you know of (either someone you know personally or a well-known person). What did they do that was courageous?

## 2 READING

a Read the extract from a student's thesis on the topic 'Courage in occupations'. How similar is the definition of courage to yours?

b According to the extract:

- 1 Do most people agree on the definition of courage?
- 2 Which of these do 'Rate et al' consider to be essential ingredients of showing courage?
  - a overcoming fear
  - b making a conscious decision
  - c taking a risk
  - d not giving up
  - e aiming to do good

c Look at the three quotations next to the text. What aspect of courage do you think they highlight? Give a paraphrase of each quotation in your own words.

## What do we mean by 'courage'?

Many historical figures have provided varying definitions of the concept of courage. Not only do these popular definitions differ from each other in their mandated requirements for courage, but they also differ in how they treat courage.

Courage could be defined simply as taking action in spite of fear, but the most accepted definition of courage in psychological literature, created by Rate et al. (2007), goes well beyond that. The definition is, '(a) A wilful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear'.

This definition is quite long, and it may be beneficial to break it down into its parts. First (a), all courageous behaviours must be **a voluntary behaviour**<sup>1</sup>. If an individual is forced to do a behaviour against their will, then the behaviour cannot be considered courageous. Second (b), the behaviour must have its outcomes considered by **the individual performing the behaviour**<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the actor must **consider the multiple outcomes**<sup>3</sup>, and consciously choose the courageous outcome among other possibilities. Third (c), the behaviour must have risk involved, with **the potential of negative repercussions**<sup>4</sup> for the individual performing the behaviour. Fourth (d), the behaviour must be motivated for noble purposes. Although the term 'noble' is **slightly ambiguous**<sup>5</sup> in the psychological literature, it seems that most courage studies consider it to be synonymous with prosocial (Rate et al., 2007; Rate, 2010). So, a courageous behaviour must be **primarily pro-socially motivated**<sup>6</sup>, or done with the benefits for others in mind. Fifth (e), the behaviour may or may not involve fear.

This definition describes courageous behaviours rather than courage as a personality trait, but it implies that a courageous individual is one who performs courageous behaviours.

"A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer."

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*  
(1803 – 1882)

"It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog."

*Mark Twain*

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."

*Anaïs Nin*

**d Skills focus 1** Understanding abstract expressions

Match the bold expressions in paragraph 3 with these meanings:

- a ☐ It could mean various things
- b ☐ think about different things that could happen
- c ☐ It could have bad effects
- d ☐ mainly to help other people
- e ☐ the person who is doing the action
- f ☐ something the person does from choice

What words helped you decide?

**e** Find one other abstract expression in the text. Discuss with a partner what it means and how you could say it in everyday English.

**f Skills focus 2** Noticing reference words

Cover the text and look at these sentences. Choose the underlined word you think is best.

- Not only do these / those popular definitions differ from each other ..., but they also differ in how they treat courage. (paragraph 1)
- If an individual is forced to do a behaviour against his / their will, ... (paragraph 2)
- This / That definition is quite long. (paragraph 2)
- It / This seems that most courage studies consider it to be synonymous with pro-social (paragraph 3)
- A courageous individual is he / one who performs courageous behaviours. (paragraph 4)

Check your answers. What do the underlined words refer to in the text?

**b** Add expressions in the gaps. Include forms of the words *define* or *definition*.

- The concept of loyalty \_\_\_\_\_ in various ways.
- It's difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ of the word 'culture'.
- A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ democracy is 'rule by the people for the people'.
- Empathy \_\_\_\_\_ being able to imagine another person's feelings

Compare with another student. Did you write the same expressions?

**STUDY SKILLS: LEARNING COLLOCATIONS**

- Instead of learning just the words *define* and *definition*, it's better to also learn the words they go with (their 'collocations'): a *rough definition of, define ... as*. Why is this useful?
- Look at the examples in an English-English dictionary. Find words that collocate with:
  - courage • courageous

**4 WRITING****a** Choose one of the concepts below or a concept from your own field of study.

success happiness creativity  
ambition imagination intuition

Think of different ways to define it (use a dictionary or the internet to help you), then write a paragraph explaining the concept. Try to include:

- a general statement at the beginning giving a basic definition of the concept
- one or two additional sentences giving more details or examples

**b** Read out your explanation but without naming the concept. Can other students guess what it is?**3 LANGUAGE FOCUS****Explaining key concepts****a** Look at the expressions used in paragraphs 1 and 2 to talk about concepts.

- What *verbs* can go with the word 'definition'?
- What *adjectives* can go with the word 'definition'?
- What *prepositions* can be used after these words?
  - a differ ....
  - b can/could be defined ....
  - c a definition ....

## 5 READING EXTENSION

- a** You're going to read the next chapter of the student's thesis on 'Courage in occupations'. He identifies five different kinds of courage which can be found in the workplace:

physical courage	moral courage	entrepreneurial courage	managerial courage	social courage
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What do you think each kind of courage might involve?

- b** Read the text on the next page. Are the ideas similar to yours?
- c** Read the text again and make notes in the table. Then compare with another student. Did you note down the same points?

4G 12:00					
?	TYPE	?	DEFINITION	?	EXAMPLES
1	Physical courage		risk to own physical well-being for the benefit of others		a firefighter saving a child
2					
3					
4					
5					

### CRITICAL THINKING

#### APPLYING ABSTRACT CONCEPTS TO REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES

What kind of courage do you think these people showed? Use the table in 5c to help you decide.

- FRIDA** We organised a protest in the main square, but some of us were arrested by the police.
- HANS** It started snowing heavily, but we managed to find the stranded walkers and bring them down safely to the valley.
- MAGDA** I noticed she was cheating in the test, so I told her it wasn't fair on the others in the class.
- CARLA** I had to make ten employees redundant, otherwise we would have gone bankrupt.
- BORIS** I was very nervous but I decided to give a speech at the office party.
- ANTHONY** I decided to quit my well-paid office job and put all my savings into opening a café.

- e** The text is mainly concerned with courage in business organisations. Do you think the same kinds of courage are also relevant in your own field of study? Can you think of any examples?



# Types of courage

**While many philosophers and researchers have sought to define courage, others have identified different dimensions of courage. Different types of courage are often categorised according to the risks involved in taking action.**

Almost every account of courage includes the idea of physical courage (Clancy, 2003; Putman, 1997; Woodard, 2004). An act of physical courage can be defined as a behaviour where the risk is a threat to an individual's own physical well-being. A classic example of physical courage is a firefighter who enters into a burning building to save a child; the firefighter is voluntarily and consciously risking personal physical well-being for the betterment of others.

Physical courage is often easy to conceptualise because the risks are observable in nature; however, other kinds of courage are arguably more important in an organisational or work context. Physical courage is crucial for occupations such as soldier or firefighter; however, it seems unlikely that physical courage is essential in the day-to-day work of most white-collar employees. Kidder (2005) goes as far as to say that physical courage is no longer needed in today's society. Researchers have provided qualitative reports of experiences of other kinds of courage in the workplace (Schilpzand, 2008; Worline, Wrzesniewski, and Rafaeli, 2002). From these reports, four types of courage emerge that typically arise in an organisational setting.

The first of these is moral courage. A possible definition of moral courage is 'the ability to use inner principles to do what is good for others, regardless of threat to self, as a matter of practice.' (Sekera and Bagozzi, 2007, p. 135), or more generally 'doing the right thing.' When employees describe experiences of moral courage at work, they mention instances in which employees must stand up for their beliefs for the good of others (Graham, 1995), or even when a nurse is forced to decide whether to resuscitate a patient who is dying in pain (Lachman, 2007a). These instances of courage generally emerge in high-risk situations, since they involve a conflict of one's inner values. Also, moral courage is the most written about form of courage (Sekera, Bagozzi, and Charnigo, 2009), and the most commonly identified as being important for workplace interactions (Hannah, Avolio, and Fred, 2011). Authors have often noted the importance of moral courage in employee whistle-blowing behaviours (Bashir, Khattak, Hanif, and Chohan, 2011; Faunce, Bolsin, Chan, 2004), as well as leadership positions (Wasylyshyn and Stefano, 2006). These researchers frequently argue that not only do organisations benefit from morally courageous employees, but so does society as a whole.

However, while instances that require moral courage have caught the attention of researchers and practitioners, they do not occur very frequently. Rarely does an employee 'whistle-blow' or decide whether to resuscitate a patient (Lachman, 2007a) and other forms of courage may be more relevant to day-to-day interactions in the workplace.

Another often identified type of courage is entrepreneurial courage, which generally describes when an individual takes a financial risk and the associated ramifications with the loss of money (or loss of property/safety) (Schilpzand, 2008). Entrepreneurial courage can be seen when individuals make a risky investment, unsure of whether their money will pay off. For example, if an individual buys many shares in a start-up company with the assumption that they may or may not see a return on their investments, they are showing entrepreneurial courage.

A third, often mentioned subset of courage is managerial courage. Managerial courage is defined as, 'willingness to do right in the face of risk' (Van Eynde, 1998). Although this definition seems to be very similar to moral courage, 'do[ing] right' in this case includes behaviours which do not involve an individual's morals or values but merely with practical outcomes, such as giving feedback to an employee (Furnham, 2002). Unlike the other types of courage, managerial courage is not so much defined by the risks involved as by its effect on success in the workplace.

The fourth type of mentioned workplace courage is social courage, which I would define as a display of courage in which the risks involved could damage an individual's esteem in the eyes of others. It appears that social courage is generally involved in two types of behaviours. The first type of behaviour is that which could result in damaging one's interpersonal relationships (Worline, Wrzesniewski, and Rafaeli, 2002). Two examples are when an individual gives corrective feedback to an employee and risks upsetting the employee, or when an individual confronts a disruptive co-worker who may react with anger. The second type of social courage behaviour is that which could result in damage to one's social image or loss of face. This could happen for a variety of reasons. For example, if individuals ask for help on tasks, this could lead others to believe that they are weak or lacking in knowledge of the task they were assigned, and they would lose esteem in the eyes of others.

