Courageous Leadership: Empowering and Inspiring Action for All

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Ohio Leadership Advisory Council
Action Forum
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Guiding Principles

• Courage is in all of us
• School leaders must act courageously to create high performing schools
• Nothing changes, if nothing changes
Research for the Keynote

EVERYDAY COURAGE for SCHOOL LEADERS
CATHY LASISTER
Part I: Foundations in everyday courage
Rationale
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.</td>
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<th>Standard 7. Professional Community for Teachers &amp; Staff</th>
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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. (p.9)
PSEL Standard 3
Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
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. (p.11)
Tommy Thompson, New London High, CT

Ashton Clemmons, Brooks Global, NC

Emily Paul, (retired)
Good Shepard of the Nativity,
New Orleans, LA

Walter Perez, Austin Elementary, TX

Stan Law, Arlington High, IN
The Meaning
Courage for school leaders?

What is courage?
Courage is described as (1) a willful, intentional act, (2) executed after mindful deliberation, (3) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (4) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or morally worthy purpose, (5) despite the presence of the emotion of fear. (Rate, Clarke, Lindsay & Sternberg)
There is no courage without fear.
Our Deepest Fear
Kinds of Courage for School Leaders

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

Still, courage is courage — whatever kind.
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 setbacks and failures for the greater good.

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 biases and intentionally moving away from them in order to vicariously experience the trials and triumphs of others.

Everyday Courage
Partner Talk

Discuss the extent to which these types of courage are needed by school leaders with specific examples that require one or more of the 4 kinds of courage.
What’s happening in TBT’s and BLT’s?

[Image of Albert Einstein writing on a blackboard: "Question everything"]

[Diagram of the Ohio 5-Step Process:
- **STEP 1**: Collect and chart data.
- **STEP 2**: Analyze data.
- **STEP 3**: Establish shared expectations for implementing specific changes.
- **STEP 4**: Implement changes consistently.
- **STEP 5**: Collect, chart, and analyze post data.]

[Corwin Publishing logo]
Determining Impact on All Students
Kinds of Courage

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Part II: Does everyone have courage?
Does everyone have courage?

Growing body of research in psychology and neuroscience on how courage operates in the brain

Research says, yes!
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
Research

• Purpose: Measure fear and document courage in the brain
Snakes in an MRI Machine
Fear Thou Not: Activity of Frontal and Temporal Circuits in Moments of Real-Life Courage

SUMMARY

How does the brain encode courage in a real-life fearful situation that demands an immediate response? In this study, volunteers who had snakes staged to be close to their heads were scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The amygdala was activated in association with a dissociation between subjective fear and somatic arousal. Activity of 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 approaching the snake, but not upon observing it. Conversely, activity in the right temporal pole was negatively correlated with the level of fear upon approaching the snake. These findings suggest that the amygdala, which is involved in the processing of threat, and the sgACC, which is involved in the regulation of emotion, play a role in the experience of courage.

INTRODUCTION

The human philosopher Bertrand Russell once said, "People are far more afraid of snakes than they are of tigers." Indeed, snakes are among the most feared animals in the world. This fear is not only driven by the perception of danger but also by the psychological and emotional impact of encountering such creatures. The fear of snakes, or ophiophobia, is a common phobia that affects millions of people worldwide. It is characterized by intense anxiety and avoidance behavior when confronted with snakes or images of them.

The neural mechanisms underlying this fear response have been extensively studied, and much is known about the role of the amygdala in fear processing. However, little is known about the neural basis of courage, or the ability to overcome fear in stressful situations. In this study, we aimed to investigate the neural correlates of courage by examining the activity of the amygdala and the sgACC during a real-life fear-provoking task.

METHODS

In this study, we recruited a group of volunteers who were asked to approach a live snake that was placed close to their heads. The volunteers were scanned using fMRI while they were exposed to the snake. The amygdala and the sgACC were identified as regions of interest in previous studies of fear and courage. The activity in these areas was recorded and analyzed using statistical methods.

RESULTS

The results showed that the amygdala was activated in association with the subjective experience of fear. However, the activity of the sgACC was positively correlated with the level of courage expressed by the volunteers. Furthermore, the activity of the right temporal pole was negatively correlated with the level of fear.

CONCLUSION

Our findings suggest that the amygdala plays a role in the processing of fear, while the sgACC is involved in the regulation of emotion during moments of courage. These results provide new insights into the neural mechanisms underlying the experience of fear and courage, and may have implications for the treatment of fear-related disorders.
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.
Study 2: The Role of Courage in the Workplace

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
Partner Talk

Share an experience you have had at work which is related to the findings in research on courage.
The Three Cups of Courage

- Trust
- Accountability
- Risk-Taking
Personal and Collective Accountability

Make It Happen
Find Solutions
“Embrace it!”
Acknowledge Reality
Wait and Hope
“I Can’t”
Personal Excuses
Blame Others

Unaware or Unconscious

“Accountable Behaviors”
Things Happen
Because of You

“Victim Behaviors”
Things Happen
To You
Collective accountability is the shared responsibility for results and the cooperative work among all staff to achieve at high levels. People are strongly connected, and they feel responsible to each other for getting their work done.
Organizational trust is dependent on the actions of the leader.
Trust builds
Organizational Citizenship
Taking Risks in Service of Students
Building YOUR Courageous Mindset
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
Listen to the voice of strength, confidence, power and passion.
______% of self talk is negative

Roselle, B. 2006. Fearless Leadership: Conquering Your Fears and the Lies that Drive Them. Leader Press. Minneapolis, MN
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
Worrying constantly and staying on high alert will impede your development as a courageous leader.
Excessive worrying takes away focus, causes fatigue and stress, and steals joy.
# Keep Worry at Bay

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<td>Worries about substantial issues</td>
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<td>½ of the 8% or 4%</td>
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The best antidote for worry is purposeful action toward a meaningful goal.
3. Maintain Optimism
“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.”

- Harry S Truman
Be deliberate about your optimism and keep optimistic people around you.
Give yourself credit for what is best in you.
Optimists outperform pessimists by 50%
A tale of two sales executives

“The prospects for sales are dim because no one wears shoes here.”
A tale of two sales executives

“The prospects for sales are tremendous because no one wears shoes here!”
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.
Eddie Murphy-Imagine That
In conclusion,
Remember this……..

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”

Maya Angelou
Closure and Questions

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