

Courage

Grades 6-8

Segment Summary:

Even though Masha Malikina suffered severe injuries in a car accident that left her a paraplegic, she exhibits the courage to share her experience with other teens while also pursuing the activities that she enjoyed before her life-altering accident.

Masha Malikina started skiing when she was only 2 years old. By the time she was a teenager, she had developed her own style, her own form, her own “everything” on the slopes. But her life’s focus suddenly changed when she injured her spinal cord in a car accident. Doctors told 15-year-old Masha she would never walk again, but instead of feeling sorry for herself, she has found the courage to go on with her life by taking the determination and tenacity she used in skiing and redirecting it toward teaching kickboxing after school and painting. Masha admits it’s not always easy to be positive. Things she enjoyed doing before the accident, like going to the beach, are now reminders of how much her life has changed. Sometimes she forgets she’s unable to walk, and when she remembers, she feels like crying. But Masha is determined to not give in to self-pity. She puts on a brave face, even when she doesn’t feel like it, and continues to do her best. Despite the tough battle ahead of her, Masha remains valiant and persistent. She says she knows she’ll walk again because she’s “one of the most stubborn people in the world” and she “always gets her way.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What character traits does Masha display?
2. What is your definition of courage?
3. How does Masha exhibit courage at school, at home, in her community, etc.?
4. What do you think Masha’s first thoughts were when the doctors told her she would never walk again?
5. Masha says sometimes she wants to just sit in a corner and cry. Why do you think she chooses not to do so?
6. Friends say Masha picked up the pieces of her life and moved on. How do you think she was able to do that?
7. Have you ever had to act courageously when you didn’t feel like it inside? How did you do it?
8. Do people have to be born with courage or can they learn to be courageous?
9. How have you reacted to people who, like Masha, were courageous enough to do the unexpected?
10. How do courageous people handle life-altering changes?
11. Where do you find courage when you feel like giving up at school or at home?

Vocabulary Words and Definitions:

Adapt (v.)

Definition: to gradually change one's behavior and ideas to fit a new situation

Context: Miranda was able to adapt quickly to her new school by using the same route to get to her classes each day.

Adversity (n.)

Definition: a condition of suffering or affliction

Context: Even though he was deaf, Johan overcame his adversity and won a position on the football team.

Ancestor (n.)

Definition: a member of a person's family who lived a long time ago

Context: My ancestors left Ireland with the hopes of a better life and more opportunities in America.

Assimilation (n.)

Definition: the process of becoming part of a group or being accepted by others

Context: When immigrants arrive in a new country, they usually go through a period of assimilation in which they conform to their new surroundings.

Bravery (n.)

Definition: an action, behavior or attitude that enables a person to deal with danger, pain or difficult situations with courage and confidence

Context: His bravery during the hostage crisis was an inspiration to those who did nothing to stop the bank robbers.

Courage (n.)

Definition: mental or moral strength to persevere and withstand danger, fear or difficulty

Context: Cassandra had the courage to tell the teacher about the gun she saw in her classmate's locker.

Erode (v.)

Definition: to gradually reduce someone's power or confidence; to become weaker

Context: By standing up for one another, Tino and Jasmine were able to erode the bully's power over them.

Genealogy (n.)

Definition: the study of the history of a family, especially a study that shows how each person is related to the others

Context: While I was studying my genealogy, I found out that I am a distant relative of George Washington.

Heritage (n.)

Definition: the traditional beliefs, values, customs, etc., of a family, country or society

Context: Songs and legends that have been passed down from generation to generation are part of our American heritage.

Injustice (n.)

Definition: a situation in which people are treated very unfairly and not given their rights

Context: The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought to end injustice based on race.

Persecute (v.)

Definition: to treat someone cruelly or unfairly, especially because of his or her religious or political beliefs

Context: The victim alleged the media was trying to persecute him by slanting the facts and making accusations without attributing them to a valid source.

Risk (n.)

Definition: the possibility that something bad or dangerous may occur

Context: If you gamble, there is a risk you will lose your money.

Valor (n.)

Definition: great courage in the face of danger or war

Context: My uncle received a medal for his valor after he saved two children from a burning building.

Activity: Good Risk? Bad Risk?

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Record examples of risky behaviors
- Rank behaviors based on the amount of courage required to take risks
- Describe personal experiences
- Distinguish between good risks and bad risks
- Present scenarios to peers

Materials:

- Pens, pencils
- Notebook paper, butcher paper

Procedure:

1. Working in groups of four, have students develop two separate lists of good and bad risks, recording as many as they can of each.

Examples:

- **Bad risks:** accepting a dare from a friend, lying, cheating, stealing, smoking, drinking alcohol, taking prescription drugs, taking illegal drugs, having an eating disorder, using steroids, having sex, etc.
 - **Good risks:** volunteering, making new friends, participating in sports, not sharing homework with peers, public speaking, asking for help when needed, etc.
2. After creating each list, have groups rank the good risk and bad risk lists separately. The ranking needs to be based on the amount of courage required to take each one of the risks (1 = least amount of courage required and 10 = most amount of courage required).
 3. Have students transfer their lists with the courage rankings to large pieces of butcher paper.
 4. Once students develop these lists, hang the lists up around the room and have students walk around in their groups making notes of any risks their group might have missed.
 5. Discuss the different lists that students developed by talking about why certain risks are either good or bad and why certain types of risks require more courage than others. If groups ranked the same risk differently, ask why and how they assigned these rankings. Consider these questions:
 - What role does courage play in taking risks? Is more courage required to take good risks or bad risks? Why?
 - What are some potential outcomes of good risks? What are the possible consequences of bad risks?
 - Which risks are more attractive or most common with students today?
 - Does peer pressure influence your "risk-taking behavior"?
 - Do some students believe that it takes courage or valor to take a bad risk?
 6. Ask groups to write two different scenarios. One scenario must present a risky behavior that is bad, and the other scenario must spotlight a good risk. Allow students time to present their scenarios to the class so they can offer solutions to the bad risks and comment on the good risks.