

Emotional courage essay



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Courage: An Extended Definition The current dictionary definitions of courage are inadequate because they only include references to physical courage and omit instances of inner strength. Three contemporary dictionaries agree closely on the definition although they differ in the order of importance. Webster's New World Dictionary describes courage as " an attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult or painful, instead of withdrawing from it," and The American Heritage Dictionary gives a similar explanation.

While The Shorter Oxford Dictionary concurs with this meaning, it states that the primary definition is " spirit, mind, or disposition. " Courage is not just found in the veteran soldier who can display shiny medals or in the policeman who bravely risks his life for justice as portrayed on television or in films.

Suicide is the antithesis of courage. It is not an elementary school boy who agrees to fight, but he who can stand up against it. A six year old girl who ventures out on her bicycle for the first time displays as much courage as a young man who witnesses a murder and volunteers to testify in court.

Courage is a state of mind that enables a person to overcome fear, pain, danger, or hardship.

Although different from one another, all aspects of courage involve taking risks. One facet, physical courage, entails facing fears of possible bodily harm. For instance, a 22 year old man, unable to swim, jumps into a swift current to rescue a six year old who has slipped and fallen. A young fireman who rushes into a burning building to save a baby and a nineteen-

year-old Vietnam soldier who leaves the safety of the trench to preserve the life of a wounded friend have physical courage.

Elizabeth Morgan, who risked a Jail term to protect her daughter Hilary from her injurious father, exemplifies courage. Another form, mental courage, means standing up and not yielding to phobias. While some fear speaking in front of a large audience, others fear heights. A teenager who puts down her fear of flying to visit an ailing, distant grandmother, and a freshman who conquers his fear of public speaking to run for a student council office both exhibit mental courage.

Thirdly, emotional courage requires the ability to continue on with life after a tragedy. Robert Ingersoll stated that " the greatest test of courage on earth is to bear defeat without losing heart"(98). For instance, a mother who loses her son in a car accident does not despair but forms an alliance against drunk driving to insure that he did not die in vain. Ryan White, an eighteen-year-old diagnosed as having AIDS as a child, served as a model of strength and persistence for other victims. Similarly,