



**COURAGE
RETREAT**

youth frontiers courage retreat

morning meeting/advisory time conversation starters
and follow-up activities

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COURAGE RETREAT

The following questions or tasks correlate to the activity portion of Morning Meetings as described by The Responsive Classroom® protocols.** These questions and tasks seek to reinforce the areas of core learning from the Youth Frontiers **Courage Retreat**, which are for students to:

1. Identify social fears that impede responsible decision-making and prosocial behavior.
2. Gain perspective that everyone has social fears and they are not alone in their feelings.
3. Understand moral courage.
4. Understand how acting with courage can make a positive difference for oneself and for one's school.
5. Gain confidence to resist inappropriate social pressure.
6. Deepen relationships with classmates.

The Social-Emotional Learning competencies enhanced by the retreat are:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Social Awareness
3. Responsible Decision-making

Directions for Classroom Teachers, Social Workers or Counselors:

The following activities are designed for students to write on individual white boards or journals. Students can share in small groups or with the whole group. If you jigsaw the activity, students could work in groups of two or three and then share their work back to the large group. If you have access to a SMART board, record their answers to refer back to. If you do not have a SMART board, put the results of each activity on chart paper or the white board to keep up in the room. Some activities have recommended facilitation instructions (listed in italics). The questions are grouped and ordered below. Feel free to engage in activities that best address your students' needs and issues as they arise.

**For more information on Responsive Classroom, please visit www.responsiveclassroom.org.





Courage

1. Write your definition of courage.
2. Are having courage and being brave the same or different? How?
3. On a scale of one to 10 (one being “not strongly at all” and 10 being “very strongly”) how strongly do you feel about trusting yourself to go against the crowd if you knew they were wrong? What role does fear play in your strength level?
Instruction option: Have students close their eyes and put their heads on the desks. Ask them to raise their hands when you call out the number they chose from one to 10. Keep a tally under each number. Have kids open their eyes again and discuss the results of the poll.
4. Do you ever feel like you need courage when communicating online? Do you care as much about what is right and wrong when you are communicating online? How is that different for you? How can you act with moral courage when using Facebook?

Fear

- 1.** On a piece of paper, write two or three fears that you have brought to school with you today.

Instruction option: Ask if students are willing to share their fears. Try to bring some of those fears into the discussion. Do “powerful reflective listening” to see if you can get to the reasons for the fear. Encourage students to think of ways that you can work as a community to lessen the fear.

- 2.** On a Post-it note, write down your greatest social fear like those we talked about on the Courage Retreat. Attach all the Post-its to the white board. Are there common fears (or themes of fears) listed here? Why is it that we feel so alone in our fears when clearly others are feeling the same way?

- 3.** Though we all have similar fears, how is it possible for people to have a different perspective about the same situation? What contributes to the perspectives that we hold/have?

Self-Awareness

1. Who is responsible for your choices?

Instruction option: This is an effective question for adolescents who still do not realize that they have all of the power to choose. Ask students if they will take that power and use it to make a productive action or decision, or choose the non-productive (and often destructive) decision.

2. What are you really good at? How do you know that you are good at it? Does anyone else know you are good at it? Who knows? Who would you like to know it? Is there a way you could let them know?

Teacher reference: Check out Search Institute's Peter Benson speaking at TEDxTC about "Sparks: How Youth Thrive" at www.youthfrontiers.org/TEDPeterBenson.

3. What talents, gifts or interests do you bring to this classroom? Why might it be important for you to have others know these strengths?

Instruction option: Have students share their talents in pairs or triads. Invite whole group sharing. Perhaps a student recognizes a gift or talent of someone who was not mentioned.

Relationships

- 1.** Write in your journal about one or two significant adults who you trust. What have they done to earn your trust? How do they support you? Do you feel that their support is helping you to be the best human being you can be? How?
- 2.** It's a given: Your peers are very important to you right now in your life. So: Who are your peers? Who are your friends? Are your peers also your friends? Is there a difference?
- 3.** Think about your friends (vs. your peers): Who are they? What do you have in common? What is different about you?
- 4.** When is teasing fun and appropriate and when is it not fun or appropriate? When does teasing turn into bullying or harassment?
- 5.** What healthy risks can you take when you find yourself in a bullying or harassment situation?
- 6.** Make a list of the social groups that you identify in your school. Generally speaking, what are the characteristics of students in each group? How is that decided? Who decides? What is positive about being able to identify with one of these groups in your school? What is negative about it?
- 7.** Moral courage often involves having a strong understanding of respect and having "relational trust," or being in a trusted relationship. What does respect and relational trust mean to you? What are behaviors that you can practice that would strengthen respect and relational trust? What do you think others could do?
- 8.** Do you have other ideas of things we might do in our school to build a community of understanding and respect?

Responsible Decision-Making

1. How have you learned the difference between right and wrong? Where did you learn right from wrong, and from whom?
2. When making a choice that is wrong, natural consequences may happen. What are natural consequences?
3. Can you “right a wrong”? How does remorse (feeling regret) fit in to any effort you might take to right a wrong? What are some things you can do to right a wrong?
4. Give a real-life example of a “moment of choice” where you had to choose between following the crowd and following your heart. Which did you choose at that moment and why?
5. How does knowing your classmates and friends well help you to have “moments of choice” that lead to courage rather than fear?
6. What is compassion? When you are faced with a “moment of choice,” how does compassion for others influence your choice? How does compassion for yourself influence your choice?



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- 7.** What role does empathy play in the choices you make? Does understanding another student's perspective make it easier or harder to act with courage?

- 8.** What are some basic human rights that all people have in an orderly society? How might knowing about these rights help you in having moral courage when confronted with a "moment of choice"?

- 9.** Why do you think your body reacts so strangely (heart beats faster, palms get sweaty, mouth gets dry, etc.) in a "moment of choice"?

- 10.** What is the difference between responsible decision-making and irresponsible decision-making?

- 11.** If everyone is doing it, is it automatically right? How do you know? What are some examples when "following the crowd" is wrong? What are some examples of when "following the crowd" is okay?

- 12.** It would be an all-too-easy world if every decision we had to make had a black or white answer. The challenge comes when there is lots of gray area to push us into a different level of decision-making. What does this mean?