Moral Elevation and Courage
Facilitation Guide

Tool for
Performance Character

🕐 20 minutes

✊ Educator-prep
K-12 educators

Materials

- Watch: **Beachgoers form a human chain to save a family** via Washington Post

Making Connections

Principled Innovation asks us to work with others and recognize the limits of our own knowledge so that we can better understand and tackle the complex issues our communities face.

Connecting Character Assets:

Courage
Collaboration

About this Guide

The bystander effect has often discouraged people from doing what needs to be done. Yet bystanders can be spurred to action when they observe one individual who is willing to make the first move. In this activity, students reflect on how a young couple in Florida prompted a ripple effect of bystander action to rescue swimmers trapped in a riptide.

Principled action can often draw out others to act who would have been unlikely to do so in the absence of a courageous person. Within the PI framework, courage is defined in the following way:

Courage is the willingness to take action towards a desired outcome, even in the face of uncertainty and the possibility that it may result in adversity or failure.

Courage differs from sheer willpower in the face of fear because it is rooted in a sense of values and purpose. The notion of "moral" courage, more specifically, involves courage when **compelled to action** by one's moral **value system**, which may involve action on behalf of certain groups who are disadvantaged by the current systems and **contexts**.

Prototypes and small-scaled innovation turns into true systemic innovation only when others are inspired to make the change and join us in the effort. This can be challenging because bystanders often are reluctant to take the first step and get involved. Yet taking the first step can often inspire others to get involved as well. In what psychologists call "elevation," reluctant bystanders can be turned into inspired collaborators.

Educators who feel alone in the initial act of Principled Innovation can take heart in the fact that others may be inspired by their act and join their efforts when they are willing to take the first courageous steps toward moral action.

Instructions

1 Prepare

Review the "Why use it?" section above and read the article, **The Little-Known Emotion that Makes Ethical Leadership Contagious,** by Brett Beasley, Associate Director of Notre Dame's Deloitte Center for Ethical Leadership, in which Beasley describes the role of "elevation" in psychologically inspiring us toward moral action.

2 Present

Share the PI Framework's definition of courage and ask the participants to watch the video and/or read the article:

Courage is the willingness to take action towards a desired outcome, even in the face of uncertainty and the possibility that it may result in adversity or failure.

3 Discuss

Discuss this inspiring story in a group discussion (in person or online). Here are some questions to consider using:

1. What emotions might have influenced Jessica and Derek Simmons's courageous actions?
2. In this incident, Jessica and Derek Simmons were initially only able to get a small group of people to participate in their efforts. What do you think might have been running through their mind in those first moments when they were only able to convince a few others to join them in this potentially life-threatening action?
3. Principled Innovation emphasizes collaborating around identifying problems and enacting solutions. Yet sometimes working toward the needed changes may put would-be innovators in challenging and high-pressure situations with potential social or professional consequences. This can leave us feeling lonely and frustrated in our attempt to innovate.
   a. From the perspective of the innovator who feels alone, what can we learn about bystander responses from this story?
   b. What are some historical examples in which bystanders were inspired to courageous actions by pioneering Principled Innovators?

ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College | Principled Innovation
Arizona State University