

Courage: An important virtue

Kamakshi Sabharwal and Pooja Wadhawan

Department of Psychology, Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi, Delhi

Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam, the whole world is one family. Every human being on this planet is created by a divine power and thus we all are the members of the same family. In order to increase or enhance the well-being of the family as a whole, we need to focus on improving the well-being of each and every member of that family. This paper focuses on one of the most important virtues i.e. courage. The paper discusses about what is positive psychology and courage. It also reflects upon the importance of courage in facing day to day difficulties, problems, and fears by children, teenagers, adults and hence promote their well-being. For instance, some people hesitate and find it difficult to face and deal with their friends. The fear of not being accepted by the society is one of the major cause for this. In such situations courage will increase confidence and help in reducing stress, anxiety and physical symptoms like head ache, body pain, fatigue, etc. Courage will help people to express their thoughts and feelings freely, thus, leading to happiness, acceptance and improved relationships with their friends. The different ways or methods for developing courage have been laid down in this paper.

Keywords: well-being, positive psychology, courage, fears

Every human being wants to be healthy, both physically and mentally. In today's time humans are constantly trying to succeed, to maintain meaningful relationships, and to experience positive emotions like joy, love, hope, serenity. Positive Psychology is one branch of psychology that helps humans to enhance their positive emotions, positive characteristics and virtues, and help them to lead a positive, healthy, prosperous and a happy life. This branch of psychology focuses on improving the well-being of humans. We can define well-being as a condition or a state of being happy, healthy (physically & mentally), comfortable and prosperous. Well-being is a state of complete absence of illnesses, disorders, negative thoughts. It is that condition in which you are able to overcome all the problems and difficulties in life successfully and prosper. Martin Seligman, the president of APA (American Psychological Association) in 1998, famously known as the father of positive psychology has carried out research works and has written various books on positive psychology. He gave a theory called Well-being theory, in this he stated that well-being has five measurable elements- (PERMA) - Positive emotions (happiness & life satisfaction are all aspects of this), Engagement, Relationships (positive relationships), Meaning and purpose and Accomplishment. He viewed well-being as the main topic of positive psychology. Seligman has laid down and described strengths and virtues that enable human thriving. There are six virtues- wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence. Almost every culture across the world supports them and twenty four character strengths. This paper focuses on courage, its importance in promoting well-being and ways or methods of developing it.

Courage is one of the most important ingredient of a happy, healthy and a successful life. It is one of the most important virtues that promotes well-being. In Character Strengths and Virtues: A

Handbook and Classification (CSV; Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

courage is defined as "emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in face of opposition, external or internal". We can understand courage as a mental state that helps humans to move forward in life despite of various obstacles they face daily. Obstacles here refer to day to day difficult or challenging situations, problems and fears. In this paper the focus is on the fears and not phobias, fear is a human emotion, one experiences this emotion when he or she is scared of something or someone, whereas phobia is an extreme level of fear. Number of people having phobias are less, but fear is an emotion that everyone experiences almost daily.

Courage is not an isolated topic. It is one of the topics that has gained a lot of importance. Different researches have been done on this topic. Woodard and Pury (2007) carried out research and developed a scale to measure courage, consisting twenty three items, called Woodard and Pury Courage Scale. Research has also been done to find out which part of the brain is involved in courage. Uri Nili and colleagues discovered that when humans are involved in courageous act there is increase in activity in the prefrontal cortex region called subgenual anterior cingulate. Other researchers have also carried out research works to gain more insight about courage.

Importance of courage

Children, teenagers, adults, all of them have problems, difficulties and fears. In today's time these challenges, problems, fears, difficulties have increased so much in day to day life that people stay stressed, anxious, tensed, frustrated for the majority of the time of the day. They experience more negative emotions like aggression, sadness rather than positive emotions. They are not being able to maintain healthy relationships and grow and succeed in life. They are not healthy, both physically and mentally. They suffer from headache, body and muscle pains, tiredness, lack of energy, fatigue. Their mental health is declining, if this continues they can develop mental disorders like sleep disorders, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, etc. All of the difficulties and challenges people face are linked with their fears. Children face difficulties in

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Pooja Wadhawan
Department of Psychology, Mata Sundri College for Women
University of Delhi, Delhi
E-mail: poojamalik.m@gmail.com