Center for
Strategy &
Leadership

72. Courageous Core Model
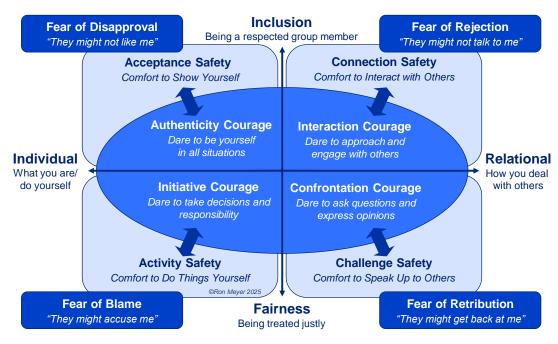
What types of courage do I need to be effective?

Key Definitions

Courage, or *bravery,* is the quality of overcoming fear – it is the psychological strength to act despite experiencing a feeling of dread. People are courageous when they sense that they face an unsafe situation and still maintain their ability to function.

Soldiers, firefighters and police officers must sometimes deal with a lack of *physical safety*, but everyone must regularly deal with a lack of *psychological safety*. People can feel psychologically unsafe if they fear negative social reactions, such as disapproval, rejection, blame and retribution.

Conceptual Model

The *Courageous Core Model* builds on the *Psychological Safety Compass* (Meyer's Management Models #40), that outlined four common fears (below in dark blue) and the four related types of psychological safety that leaders should strive to provide to the people around them (in light blue). But while the Psychological Safety Compass highlighted the role of the leader in creating a safe environment, the Courageous Core Model emphasizes the responsibility of every individual to act bravely. The model suggests that no environment can be made entirely safe, so people need to build up a courageous core to dare to function despite their fears. The less safety on offer externally, the more courage that will be required internally.

Fear of Disapproval
"They might not like me"

Inclusion
Being a respected group member

Fear of Rejection
"They might not talk to me"

Acceptance Safety
Comfort to Show Yourself

Connection Safety
Comfort to Interact with Others

Authenticity Courage
Dare to be yourself in all situations

Interaction Courage
Dare to approach and engage with others

Individual
What you are/ do yourself

Relational
How you deal with others

Initiative Courage
Dare to take decisions and responsibility

Confrontation Courage
Dare to ask questions and express opinions

Activity Safety
Comfort to Do Things Yourself

Challenge Safety
Comfort to Speak Up to Others

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Fear of Blame
"They might accuse me"

Fairness
Being treated justly

Fear of Retribution
"They might get back at me"

Key Elements

The four types of courage required are the following:

1. ***Authenticity Courage: Dealing with the Fear of Disapproval.*** Everyone would like to be accepted for who they truly are, without the need to live up to other people's expectations.

However, in many circumstances, behavioral norms are strict, people are judgmental, and you will be pressured to conform to preconceived notions of how things should be. But instead of caving in to this looming social disapproval, you can exhibit authenticity courage, by staying close to your genuine self. This can include looking and sounding different, coming from a different background, and having different thoughts, opinions and feelings.

2. *Interaction Courage: Dealing with the Fear of Rejection*. Even introverts like it when it is easy to talk to other people and everyone feels at ease in each other's company. However, in many situations, social interactions are far from smooth, as status differences and group affiliations come into play, giving you a signal that you are not part of the in-crowd. But instead of avoiding people because of the fear of being rejected, you can exhibit interaction courage, by trying to connect, nevertheless. This can range from simply striking up a conversation, all the way to asking to be included in others' circle or club.

3. *Initiative Courage: Dealing with the Fear of Blame*. To get things done, people need to make decisions and take actions, but there is always a danger that mistakes will be made and/or that things will go wrong. In many situations, the first response to a failure is not to search for a solution, but to seek out the guilty, so taking on responsibilities can be rather risky. In the same way, making tough choices can be dangerous, as dissatisfied stakeholders will vent their anger at the decision-maker. Yet, instead of shying away from taking action, you often need to show initiative courage and risk taking some of the blame.

4. *Confrontation Courage: Dealing with the Fear of Retribution*. It is in the clash of ideas and perspectives that new insights develop, and creative solutions are formulated. So, you would expect that challenging people's views and asking tough questions would be seen as valuable aspects of group interaction. However, in many circumstances, such diversity of opinion is seen as disruptive and disrespectful, so needs to be suppressed. But instead of faking consensus to avoid the threat of retribution, you can exhibit confrontation courage, by posing uncomfortable questions and suggesting unpopular alternatives.

Key Insights

- *Courage is about overcoming fear*. Being courageous doesn't mean you're not scared, but rather that you have the willpower to act despite being scared. Courage is the quality that makes you choose fight over flight when confronted with a dangerous situation.

- *Courage is required when safety is lacking*. Without danger, courage is not required. But the more unsafe a situation, the more courage is required to act. Situations can lack *physical safety*, but more often people need to overcome a lack of *psychological safety*.

- *Courage is about overcoming four types of fear.* People can have two types of social inclusion worries, namely the fear of not being accepted for who they are (*fear of disapproval*) and not being welcomed as social counterpart (*fear of rejection*). They can also have two types of fairness worries, namely the fear of being unjustly condemned for actions they have taken (*fear of blame*) and unjustly retaliated against for speaking up (*fear of retribution*).

- *Courage also comes in four types*. Fear of disapproval can be countered by daring to be yourself (*authenticity courage*), fear of rejection by daring to engage with others (*interaction courage*), fear of blame by daring to take decisions and responsibility (*initiative courage*) and fear of retribution by daring to express opinions (*confrontation courage*).

- *Courage comes from the inside, safety from the outside.* Leaders can try to create a safe environment, but people need to strengthen their inner core of courage themselves. Resilience to danger starts with taking responsibility for building one's own brave heart.

Meyer's Management Models
Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

July 2019	*Mind the Gap Model*	*Change Management*
August 2019	*Digital Platform Map*	*Digital Strategy*
September 2019	*Interaction Pressure Gauge*	*Interpersonal Interaction*
October 2019	*Revenue Model Framework*	*Revenue Model Typology*
November 2019	*House of Engagement*	*Organizational Engagement*
December 2019	*Confidence Quotient*	*Trust Building*
January 2020	*Competition Tornado*	*Competitive Strategy*
February 2020	*11C Synergy Model*	*Corporate Synergy Management*
March 2020	*Leadership Fairness Model*	*Leader-Follower Interaction*
April 2020	*Strategic Agility Model*	*Strategy Process Approach*
May 2020	*Control Panel*	*Corporate Control Dimensions*
June 2020	*Rising Star Framework*	*Talent Management*
July 2020	*Strategy Development Cycle*	*Strategy Process Steps*
August 2020	*7I Corporate Center Model*	*Corporate Organization*
September 2020	*Storytelling Scripts*	*Leadership Communication*
October 2020	*Strategic Bets Framework*	*Strategic Decision-Making*
November 2020	*Rebound Model of Resilience*	*Organizational Resilience*
December 2020	*4C Leadership Capabilities*	*Leadership Competences*
January 2021	*Digital Product Model Dial*	*Digital Strategy*
February 2021	*Digital Distribution Model Dial*	*Digital Strategy*
March 2021	*Empowerment Cycle*	*Employee Empowerment*
April 2021	*Innovation Box*	*Innovation Approaches*
May 2021	*Knowledge Sharing Bridges*	*Best Practice Sharing*
June 2021	*Followership Cycle*	*Leader-Follower Interaction*
July 2021	*Everest Model of Change*	*Change Management*
August 2021	*Fruits & Nuts Matrix*	*Priority-Setting*
September 2021	*Powerhouse Framework*	*People & Organization Strategy*
October 2021	*Strategy Hourglass*	*Strategy-Making Steps*
November 2021	*Disciplined Dialogue Model*	*Interpersonal Communication*
December 2021	*Team Building Cycle*	*Team Building Process*
January 2022	*Market System Map*	*External Analysis Framework*
February 2022	*Strategic Alignment Model*	*Business Level Strategy*
March 2022	*Creativity X-Factor*	*Creativity Enhancement*
April 2022	*Organizational System Map*	*Organizational Analysis*
May 2022	*Corporate Value Creation Model*	*Corporate Level Strategy*
June 2022	*Change Manager's Toolbox*	*Change Methodologies*

July 2022	Sustainable You Model	Personal Sustainability
August 2022	Value Proposition Dial	Business Level Strategy
September 2022	The Tree of Power	Organizational Power
October 2022	Psychological Safety Compass	Team Dynamics
November 2022	Strategic Action Modes	Strategy Process
December 2022	Corporate Management Styles	HQ Management
January 2023	Thinking Directions Framework	Reasoning Skills
February 2023	5I Innovation Pipeline	Innovation Process
March 2023	Resistance to Change Typology	Change Management
April 2023	Ambition Radar Screen	Motivation Analysis
May 2023	Corporate Strategy Framework	Corporate Strategy
June 2023	Cultural Fabric Model	Organizational Culture
July 2023	New Pyramid Principle	Presentation Approaches
August 2023	Activity System Dial	Value Creation Analysis
September 2023	Customer-Centricity Circle	Organizational Design
October 2023	Status Snakes & Ladders	Leadership Branding
November 2023	Stakeholder Stance Map	Stakeholder Management
December 2023	Best Practice Sharing Modes	Sharing Methods
January 2024	Duty of Care Feedback Model	Feedback Method
February 2024	BOLD Vision Framework	Organizational Vision
March 2024	MOVING Mission Framework	Organizational Mission
April 2024	Leadership Circle Map	Leadership Skills
May 2024	Digitalization Staircase	Digital Strategy
June 2024	Time Management Funnel	Personal Time Management
July 2024	Wicked Problem Scorecard	Organizational Decision-Making
August 2024	Hunting & Farming Typology	Sales Management
September 2024	Guiding STAR Matrix	Objective Setting Approach
October 2024	Corporate Synergy Typology	Corporate Level Strategy
November 2024	Self-Centered Thinking Traps	Thinking Styles
December 2024	Sustainability Maturity Ladder	Sustainability Management
January 2025	Top Line Growth Pie	Growth Strategy
February 2025	Innovation Sins & Virtues	Innovation Management
March 2025	Interpersonal Interaction Drivers	Communication Determinants
April 2025	Frictionless Flow Framework	Customer Journey
May 2025	Five Phases of Change	Change Management
June 2025	Courageous Core Model	Leadership Behaviors
July 2025	Integration Zipper Model	Corporate Strategy
August 2025	Embedded Innovation Pipeline	Innovation Management
September 2025	New Learning Curve	Personal Learning
October 2025	Synergy Value Matrix	Corporate Level Strategy

November 2025	Triple Diamond Model	Organizational Decision-Making
December 2025	Embedded Identity Model	Personal Awareness
January 2026	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations
February 2026	Dynamic Organization Paradigm	Human-centered Organization
March 2026	Leadership Journey	Leadership Development
April 2026	Low Performance Team Slide	Team Building
May 2026	Performance Assignment Matrix	Corporate Strategy