






Step Up Your Courage

Take the next step in your journey of courage

ACTING | Courage

→ What you will need:

-  At least 9
-  Groups of 3
-  1 hr preparation
-  3 hrs execution
-  Handouts, pens

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- I. Overview
- II. Learning Activity
- III. Assessment
- IV. Key Advice
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→ Related Tools:



[Making Courageous Decisions](#)



“Meet the courageous VIP within you. Through interviews, role-playing scenes and reflective questions, you will be guided to take the next step in demonstrating courageous behaviour.”

—Nienke Meulenbroeks & Daniëlle Takkenberg





I. Overview

Using 'scale walking' (Visser, 2016), a coaching technique that emphasises recognising achievements, setting manageable next steps, and making progress measurable (Dijkstra, 2013; De Bruin, 2017), students evaluate their level of courage and visualise their journey towards achieving their goals, ultimately boosting greater confidence and courage.

Through group discussions, students explore the challenges they face when being courageous in various situations, identify what they need to build their courage and collaborate with their peers on strategies for improvement.

By practising with new information and insights based on their personal intended learning outcomes, the tool incorporates role-playing exercises, allowing students to apply new insights and practice courageous behaviour in realistic scenarios. This hands-on approach creates a safe and supportive space for individuals to grow their courage, while receiving peer feedback and guidance.

Learning outcome



The student shows increased confidence in social situations by engaging in and demonstrating courageous behaviours





II. Learning Activity

Using a collaborative and playful approach, combining interview techniques with game elements, students take the next step in demonstrating courage.



1. Interviewing the VIP 1 hour

Introducing the session, explain that the focus will be on developing courage in social settings and situations. Split the group into teams of three, in which they will work for the duration of the activity.

First, ask them to think of a situation in which they wished they had the courage to act in a social situation. This could be a recurring situation of moderate intensity – something that could serve as a practice scenario for the group later in this session.

Then, within their group of three, they will take turns interviewing each other in a role-play format. Each student will assume one of three roles during each round:

- Interviewer
- Note-taker
- VIP

The interviewer is asking the VIP for the moment they wished they had the courage to act. Meanwhile, the note-taker observes and writes down the key elements of the conversation, as well as keeps track of time. Distribute the Conversation Format handout with guiding questions to the journalists and the note-takers to document the interview. The VIP will use the notes in Step 4.

Each turn within the group takes 15–20 minutes. Once the interviews and discussion with each VIP are concluded, they switch roles; the VIP becomes the note-taker, the note-taker becomes the interviewer, and the interviewer becomes the VIP.



Tip: provide the Role Cards & Instructions to guide students through their roles. Examples of social situations or scenarios can be found under Key Advice.



2. Grading Your Courage 20 mins

On the floor, set up a scale of numbers (from 1 to 10) for each group of students. Ask the students to assess where they stand on a scale from 1 to 10 regarding their perceived courage in relation to their challenge, described in Step 1.

Within each group, each student takes 5 minutes to:

- Reflect on where they would place themselves on the scale, considering the level of courage they feel they showed in their situation.
- Think about a future goal of being more courageous. Based on the scale, they should identify what they need to reach the next number, focusing on small, achievable steps.

The interviewer assists by asking guiding questions using the Grade Your Courage Skills handout.



3. Exploring Tactics 20 mins

In their groups of three, students work in rounds of 5 minutes each. You can keep track of time for the students.

In each round, the VIP reflects individually on what they need to reach the next step they defined on the scale, using the Exploring Next Steps handout. The interviewer and note-taker respond by offering advice on tactics, resources and other ideas that could help.

After 15 minutes, give students 5 minutes to revisit their handout individually and write down which ideas and practices they would like to keep for the next step.



Tip: for inspiration, the students can refer to the Resources handout.



4. Showtime 45 mins

Students will re-enact their situation, integrating the ideas they gathered from the discussions and reflections in the previous steps.

Each student will have 15 minutes to replay their scenario, embodying the courageous person they aspire to be.

The student who plays the main character performs their role, while the others take on their parts as actors. The actors should aim to create learning opportunities for the main character. They can experiment with different approaches and replay the scene, or parts of it, multiple times in varied ways.

Tip: you can step in to collaborate with the students or even pause the scene to provide support and guidance during their learning process. Act as a coach, encouraging them to reflect and experiment. Be sure to keep track of the time and remind the students when their 15 minutes are nearly up.



5. Reflection and Check-out 20 mins

To conclude the session, ask everyone to stand in a circle. Each student will take turns stepping forward and completing the following sentence: “In order to be more courageous in social situations, I will... [intention].”

Finally, ask all students to take a moment to reflect individually on their experiences and write down their thoughts in their notebooks.



Please note, as part of assessment *as learning*, students reflect using the reflective questions. We recommend that the students meet again in their teams of three after a few weeks to reflect on the session. During this follow-up, they can check in on how their behaviour has evolved and discuss the steps they have taken to become more courageous in social situations.





III. Assessment

Throughout the activity, students monitor and reflect on their courage, using guiding questions and feedback from their peers. At the end of the activity, they answer self-reflective questions to assess their progress.



Purpose

Assessment *as* learning aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.



Roles

Self-assessment and peer assessment



Characteristics

Self-regulated learning



Materials

Reflective questions



Assessment

Reflective questions

1. Where did you start?
2. What are your feelings about this session?
3. What are your thoughts about this session?
4. Where do you stand now?





5. What will be your next step?

6. What did you learn about courage?

Notes





IV. Key Advice

Examples of social situations or scenarios (Step 1) are:

- Facing peer pressure and standing up for yourself. You feel drained and don't want to go to the social activities at work, but your colleagues pressure you to go.
- Standing up for others and acting on your instinct. You witness someone being harassed in public and wishing you had stepped in to help.

The **Conversation Format** handout and **Role Cards** (Step 1), **Grade Your Courage Skills** handout (Step 2) and **Exploring Next Steps** and **Resources** handouts (Step 3) can be downloaded below.





Conversation Format

Guiding questions for the interviewer

Pinpoint the specific challenge the VIP experienced regarding handling this situation.

What is the issue? For example, initiating a difficult conversation or a disagreement where you cannot express yourself as you want. What theme would your challenge be about?

Questions:

1. Situation: *What was the situation? Who was involved? What was the context?*
2. Task: *What was your goal or task in this situation? What did you want to achieve?*
3. Action: *What did you do, and how did you do it?*
4. Result: *What were the consequences of your action? What was the result?*
5. Reflection:
 - *What would you have done differently? What held you back from doing that?*
 - *How did the other person react? What did you think of their reaction?*
 - *How did you view the situation? What did you feel? What thoughts did you have?*
 - *What frustrated you the most? What was so difficult in this situation?*





Name:	Role:
Description of a moment where you wished you had the courage to act	
Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	
Reflection	





Role Cards & Instructions

JOURNALIST



Your responsibility is to ask the right questions to get to the VIP motivated to share their experience and goals in the conversation.

Use the conversation template for the right questions and find out what the VIP is thinking.

TIME-KEEPER



Your responsibility is to ensure that all questions on the template are discussed within the 12 minutes.

If necessary, intervene in the conversation to move on to the next topic to discuss.

NOTE-TAKER



Your responsibility is to report the core of the conversation on the the provided conversation template.

You are writing this for the VIP to take home, so try to report the conversation as clear and self-explanatory as possible.

VIP



Your responsibility is to provide input in response to questions from the journalists.

You are the VIP and the guest of honour, so sit back and share your experience, encouraged by the questions from the journalists.



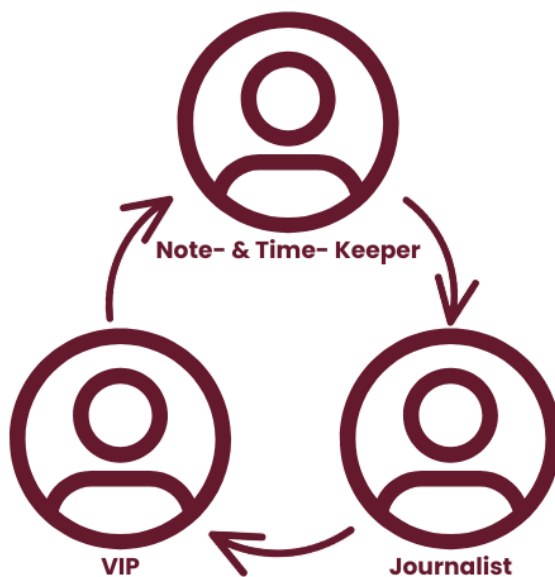
Role Cards & Instructions

Instructions

In the VIP & Journalist method, each participant takes on a specific role with defined responsibilities:

- The **VIP** (Very Important Person) is the central figure in the conversation and is asked questions about a specific topic.
- **Journalists** lead the conversation by asking prepared questions, ensuring focus and clarity. They ensure that only one person speaks at a time, maintaining focus and clarity in the discussion.
- The **Note-taker** records the key points, providing a resource for the others to revisit the answers and the progression of the discussion.
- The **Time-keeper** manages the flow of the conversation, ensuring that all topics are addressed, and the conversation remains within the allotted timeframe.

The VIP and Journalists should be seated in a way that fosters clear communication and engagement, such as in a semi-circle or around a table:



The VIP & Journalist method provides a framework for structured group communication, especially suited for people who may not know each other well. By rotating roles, every group member has the opportunity to contribute, all topics are addressed, and the conversation unfolds smoothly within a predetermined time frame. This approach fosters active engagement, focused discussion and reflective thinking (Takkenberg & Grijsbach, 2024).



Grade Your Courage Skills

Journalist

On a scale from 0 to 10, how does the VIP rate their courage regarding the challenge they described in Step 1?

0 = not courageous at all, 10 = as courageous as you can be

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

In relation to this theme, where do you think you stand on the scale right now?

Why this grade? What is the VIP already capable of?

Why did you choose this grade?

Why didn't you choose a higher or lower grade?

What is already going well?

What is the difference between the situation now and the next step for the VIP?

What can the VIP do to reach the next step?

What would be the first step to a higher grade?

What do you have to be capable of?

What do you want to practice?





Grade Your Courage Skills

Note-taker

What grade (between 0 and 10) does the VIP think they stand on regarding how courageous they perceive themselves to be surrounding the theme of their challenge, described in Step 1?

Circle this number for the VIP.

0 = not courageous at all, 10 = as courageous as you can be

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Why did you choose this grade? What is the VIP already capable of?

What can the VIP do to reach the next step?





Exploring Next Steps

Guiding questions

1. What resources can I use?
2. What new insights, advice, tactics, ideas, etc. did I gain?
3. What will I practice and how?

Notes



GIVING FEEDBACK

Be as specific as possible. A comment concerning specific behaviour in a specific situation is easier to accept than a general statement.

Don't: "You never listen" Do: "At this specific moment, you interrupted him"

Focus feedback on behaviour, not on the person. Say what that behaviour does to you or how you experience it.

Don't: "You are..." Do: "What you do..."

Formulate feedback from an "I" perspective. Build your feedback around that which you experience and feel.

"I feel that..." or "I'm getting the impression..."

Make sure feedback builds on observations, not interpretations.

This means keeping it to visible behaviour or fact.

Don't: "You think you always know better than me"

Do: "Interrupting my explanation makes it feel as if you don't value my opinion on the matter"

Make your feedback descriptive. Describe what you see, hear and feel.

Don't: "You don't listen to me"

Do: "By not looking at me and constantly glancing out the window you're giving me the impression that you're not listening to me"

Focus feedback on desired change. What can this person do different or better next time? Avoid giving feedback on things that can't be changed.

"I think it would help if you waited to chime in until the other person is done talking"

Time your feedback right, don't wait too long to give it. Giving someone feedback early on, makes it easier for them to link it to behaviour.

Positive feedback works better than negative feedback.

Highlighting positive behaviour has a stimulating effect.

Give the other person a chance to react. Check how the other person feels about the given feedback.

"It seems as if..." or "How do you feel about that?"

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GETTING FEEDBACK

Listening and questioning. Check if you understand what the other person meant and ask for clarification if needed. You could ask for concrete examples and time-stamps to put the feedback in perspective.

Check and return. Make it clear that you've heard and understood the feedback. You can do this by summarising what you've just heard.

Differentiate between fact and interpretation. Be aware of the fact that feedback relates to behavioural aspects and not to your entire person. Make sure you remain critical of the feedback and assess what you take away from it. If you feel that feedback is biased instead of it being objectively based on your behaviour, check with the feedback provider what they actually mean.

Avoid getting defensive or starting an argument. Not everyone knows how to give feedback. Try to ask for clarification about that what they try to convey.

Take ownership in feedback sessions. Feedback is most useful when the recipient takes active part in the feedback process. Ask questions on topics you want feedback on.

Acknowledge when you recognise truth in a piece of feedback. Acknowledgement of feedback shows self-reflection.

Correcting information. When you need to correct false information in received feedback make sure to first acknowledge what the feedback provider got right, before that what they got wrong. Immediately correcting them might evoke resistance.

Formulating the issue and co-operatively finding solutions. Make sure to find what the other experiences as an issue and try to find a solution together. In the exchange of feedback it is important that both sides agree what the issue is and what needs to happen to solve this.

Show gratitude for feedback. Showing that you are grateful for received feedback is a sign for the feedback provider that your relationship is unscathed. It makes sure that the conversation ends on a positive note.

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HANDLING RESISTANCE

Resistance can feel like a threat. People are then quickly inclined to put forward arguments to defend themselves. This ensures that the other person does not feel taken seriously, which only increases resistance. By responding to the other person with an understanding attitude, resistance is actually reduced. You can reduce resistance by following these steps:

Check. Let the other person know that you notice that he thinks differently. You have to identify resistance, before you are able to change it.

Do: "I hear you disagree" or "I get the feeling we are not on the same page"

Acknowledge. Change can be difficult for people. Show understanding, empathise and try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Make sure the other person feels taken seriously.

Do: "It is understandable that you have doubts, it would also be a big change."

Question. Ask the other person what their reasons for resistance are. By listening, asking questions and summarising you can find out what the reason for resistance is and respond to it.

Do: "You indicate that you have doubts, what specifically do you have doubts about?"

Addressing the resistance. Once you know what the other person is thinking, you can discuss it further. For example, if there is any uncertainty, you can provide additional information. If the other person thinks they have a better solution to the problem, then discussing this can also lead to better solutions.

Do: "Could we achieve the same result with a different solution? How could we achieve that?"

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WHY OTHERS EXPERIENCE RESISTANCE

The change is not in the interest of the other. The idea of losing out on salary, getting more workload or losing autonomy, for example, can cause someone to feel resistance towards an idea.

Take the interests of the other into account in your argumentation. What makes the change positive for the other person?

Uncertainty. Lack of clarity about what a change would mean for the other person's situation or what is specifically expected of the other person can be a reason for resistance.

Be as specific as possible with what it means for the other person and what you expect from the other person.

The other is convinced that there is a better solution. The other person may have the idea that there are better solutions or sees different problems or goals to achieve.

Look for similarities in your visions to reach an agreement together. Maybe you can find an even better solution together.

Fear of not being able to meet new demands. The other person may worry about having to learn new things, they may lack knowledge and skills that are necessary to be able to go along with new innovative ideas.

Explore together what the other person would need to feel more comfortable with the changes. What could support the other in the innovation?

Not feeling taken seriously. The other person may disagree with you on a particular problem, when the other person does not feel seen or heard, they may start to feel resistance towards the idea.

To prevent this, you can ask about the other person's view and what the other person thinks about the situation and thus reach a consensus about the situation together.

Not seeing the point of the change. The other person may be convinced that the current way of working has always gone well and therefore does not need to change.

By discussing what positive effect a change or different approach will bring to this person, you could somewhat reduce this resistance.

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ASSERTIVE ARGUMENTATION

Create a strategy and stick to it. Be prepared for the conversation and think about how you want to approach it. Make sure you have a clear picture of your proposition of idea.

What do you want to discuss? How do you want to approach that? What information will you provide and when? What is the purpose of your conversation? What are counterarguments that the other person can give and how do you respond to them?

Take initiative in the conversation. Don't wait around and take the initiative to start a conversation.

"Do you have half an hour this afternoon to talk to me about this idea I have?"

Speak from your own perspective. Speak with "I think" and "I want" instead of "Would you" or "What do you think?" Make sure you do not start your sentences with an open question but present your idea as a statement or fact.

Do: "I think it's a good idea" or "I'd like to talk to you about it."

Don't: "Do you think that" or "What do you think of"

Express your aspirations. Set clear goals and expectations and come up with concrete and feasible proposals.

Think about what would be the best outcome. What is the minimum you want to achieve? What would a first step in the right direction be?

Prepare your proposal as realistically as possible. Look at facts and clear examples.

What is information that someone else cannot undermine? How do you convey that?

Avoid relativizing comments. Express yourself strongly by speaking in the first person and avoid words that express doubt.

Do: "This way of working will increase productivity by..." "My proposal is that..."

Don't: "I would like, actually, maybe, in my opinion, I think, don't you think so too"

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Be prepared for the conversation. Be aware of the goal you want to achieve with the conversation you are having. Look at the goals you want to achieve, but also think about the interests of the other party.

Don't talk about positions and viewpoints, but about interests.

Don't formulate your goal as a concrete end point but as a problem to be solved or an interest for the company.

A point of view can be; "Within a year we must have at least this number of solar panels on the roof of our company." The interest behind this is, for example; "By becoming self-sufficient in energy as a company, we can save on energy costs in the long term, and we can become an example within our field." An interest for a company can be aimed at saving costs or to stand out as a company among all the competition. By looking at the actual problem (saving energy costs and being clearly visible among the competition), we can investigate together what other solutions are available.

Look for common interests. There are almost always common interests to be found, even if it does not seem that way at the beginning. Once you have been able to express a common interest, you can look for a solution that both parties can agree with.

Focus your energy on solving common problems. Discussions about whose fault it was or who was right or who won are not interesting for finding a solution. It takes a lot of energy and usually leads to hardening of viewpoints and an unpleasant atmosphere. Focus on the future (solving the problems) and less on the past (who was wrong).

Subjective criteria are legitimate. Accept the other person's interests and opinion as a given. Even if you disagree with someone's subjective opinion, you should still take these objective opinions into consideration.

Look for objective criteria. Look for facts to strengthen your argument.

For example, look for facts you can find about the emissions of the cars that the company leases to their employees or what a comparable company has saved by switching to solar panels.

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You can reduce tension in a conversation in various ways.

Use humour. Look at your own behaviour objectively and put how you feel into perspective.

"As you can tell, I have quite a passion for this" "I notice that it takes me a while to process all these ideas, I just can't find the words anymore."

Showing interest. Discuss what the other person is talking about, ask questions to encourage the other person to say more. By letting the other person talk a lot, you can sort out your thoughts and you may get new information react to with your own perspective.

"You were just talking about a different way of working that you had found, can you tell me more about that?"

Show appreciation. Even though a conversation may be difficult, you can show appreciation that someone is having the conversation with you. This helps reduce negative feelings and relieves tension.

"We may not agree with each other, but I appreciate that you are having this conversation with me. I find it interesting to hear your views on this too."

Listen and confirm. Letting someone tell their story and confirming that you are listening can do a lot for the tension someone feels in a conversation. Listen, summarise what they are saying and ask questions.

"So you're saying that you think this is the problem, how did you find out?"

Steps to finding a solution together when you don't see eye to eye.

1. Find out the other person's needs, wishes, interests and values.
2. Tell them what you think is important and what your needs are.
3. Identify the common interests or goals.
4. Look for creative alternatives that take the interests of both parties into account.
5. Choose one of the possible options.

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Use humour. Look at your own behaviour objectively and put how you feel into perspective.

"As you can tell, I have quite a passion for this" "I notice that it takes me a while to process all these ideas, I just can't find the words anymore."

Showing interest. Discuss what the other person is talking about, ask questions to encourage the other person to say more. By letting the other person talk a lot, you can sort out your thoughts and you may get new information react to with your own perspective.

"You were just talking about a different way of working that you had found, can you tell me more about that?"

Show appreciation. Even though a conversation may be difficult, you can show appreciation that someone is having the conversation with you. This helps reduce negative feelings and relieves tension.

"We may not agree with each other, but I appreciate that you are having this conversation with me. I find it interesting to hear your views on this too."

Listen and confirm. Letting someone tell their story and confirming that you are listening can do a lot for the tension someone feels in a conversation. Listen, summarise what they are saying and ask questions.

"So you're saying that you think this is the problem, how did you find out?"

Steps to finding a solution together when you don't see eye to eye.

1. Find out the other person's needs, wishes, interests and values.
2. Tell them what you think is important and what your needs are.
3. Identify the common interests or goals.
4. Look for creative alternatives that take the interests of both parties into account.
5. Choose one of the possible options.



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