



3 Tips for Teaching Courage

It's been said she pushes the limits of physics. And she's thought to be the most athletic female gymnast in history. With a total of 25 Olympic and World Championship medals, she is certainly the most decorated American gymnast. Her signature floor exercise has been officially named "The Biles." I'm talking about Simone Biles and she is our athlete of the month. In her book, "Courage to Soar" Simone says, "You might be blessed with some talent but in order to reach your goals you have to have the courage to go after them." So, let's talk about 3 ways you can help your athlete learn to be courageous?



If you are a movie buff, like me, you may have seen, "We Bought a Zoo." There's a scene between the father and his son, it goes like this: "You know, sometimes all you need is 20 seconds of insane courage – just literally 20 seconds of just embarrassing bravery – and I promise you that something great will come of it."

That conversation is a great example of the first step to teaching your athlete courage. That's to **TALK** about it. He's trying to teach his son that courage is NOT just the absence of fear... in fact, it might feel a bit insane at the time.

Your athlete needs to know that courage doesn't always FEEL brave... it's more about the action you take in the face of fear, than the feeling you have inside. It reminds me of what the famous cowboy actor John Wayne meant when he said "Courage is when you're scared to death and you saddle up anyway."

Talk to your kids about getting out of their comfort zone. Give them some examples. It could be volunteering for something they know nothing about? Or, standing up for their beliefs when they're challenged by the crowd... It doesn't mean there's always a perfect outcome. Kids need permission to fail, so they'll have the courage to try something new.

Secondly, **SHOW** your child what courage looks like... Share stories about times when YOU acted courageously at work, or in the community. Describe the courage of someone like Martin Luther King or Gandhi. Ask your kids at the dinner table for any acts of courage they witnessed at school, from their friends, teammates, or teachers. It could be anything. Did someone stand up to a bully? Did someone try a scary dismount at practice? Or perhaps someone had the courage to apologize after an embarrassing mistake. That takes courage.

The third way to teach courage is to stress the importance of **PRACTICING** courage. Athletes need to develop their "courage muscle" the same way they develop their physical muscles. Start small and work your way up to bigger and bigger achievements. As a family, you can challenge each person to do something brave every day, and then share it at dinner or around the TV. Try this: Ask your children, "What's the bravest thing you did today?" and let each one tell their story. Your younger kids will benefit from hearing what their older brothers or sisters have done, in the face of fear.



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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Which of the 3 tips could you use more often to teach courage?

TALK about it;

SHOW examples;

Stress **PRACTICING** it;

2

Discuss Simone's favorite quote.

"You cannot always be strong but you can always be brave."