Integration Idea
Courage and Vulnerability Part I: Definitions and Myths

Key concepts:

- Adding courage and vulnerability to our emotional vocabulary and reality checking what they mean against the myths.

  - Courage – Courage is a heart word. The root of the word courage is cor—the Latin word for "heart." Courage originally meant *"To speak one's mind by telling all one's heart."* Today that means:

    - Talking about how we feel

    - Asking for what we need

    - Being ourselves

    - Being kind to others who are trying to be themselves

    - Learning how to be brave and afraid at the exact same time

  - Vulnerability – the feeling we get during times of uncertainty, risk, or emotional exposure. This includes times when we're showing our feelings and we're not sure what people will think and times when we really care about something and people will know that we're sad or disappointed when it doesn't work out.

- Debunking some of the myths of vulnerability by:

  - Reality checking the idea that we're either brave OR afraid. Explaining that we can be afraid and brave at the same time.

  - Reality checking the idea that we don't ever have to do anything uncomfortable and we can still be brave. Being uncomfortable is part of being brave.

  - Reality checking the idea that really brave people don't feel scared or awkward. Being brave is feeling scared or awkward, accepting those feelings, and moving forward anyway.

- Helping students understand that we don't have to share everything with everyone. Being vulnerable doesn't mean oversharing. Vulnerability minus boundaries is not vulnerability. We share with people we trust.

Examples:

- I feel uncertain and unsure about something I want to do, say, or try because I don't know if it's going to work out and I might feel sad or disappointed if it doesn't.
- I want to do something I think is brave but other people might think it's dumb.
- I want to try something new that makes me feel uncomfortable or awkward.

Classroom Discussion Ideas:

- Helping students understand that experiencing vulnerability is a part of being courageous. (A great discussion idea is asking students for examples of courage and pointing out how every one of the examples shows someone navigating uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure–even superheros in Marvel!)
- Exploring how courage shows up in the classroom in small, everyday ways. What does it look like in me? What does it look like in others? Can we acknowledge bravery when we see it?
- If you're teaching older students, you might consider using the myths of vulnerability as written in *Dare to Lead*. If this makes sense for your students, here's an example of using auditioning for a school play to better understand the self-talk that fuels the myths:
  - Vulnerability is weakness. (Thinking, *"I'm weak for feeling this scared about my audition."*)
  - I don't do vulnerability. (Thinking, *"Nope, I don't let myself feel vulnerable. I either get the part or I don't and that's that."*)
  - I can go it alone. (Thinking, *"I can go through this by myself without anyone's help. No one needs to know how important this is to me."*)
  - I can be vulnerable without feeling uncomfortable. (Thinking, *"If I do X, Y, and Z, then it is guaranteed that the uncertainty and discomfort will disappear."*)
  - Trust comes before vulnerability. (Thinking, *"I don't trust anyone, and therefore I can't be vulnerable and share how I really feel about this*

audition.") Trust and vulnerability both start small and slow, and they grow hand-in-hand.

- Vulnerability means sharing all the personal details of my life with everyone. (Thinking, *"I have to tell every single person how scared I am about my audition."*) Vulnerability is not TMI, oversharing, or shocking people.

In addition to reading *Dare to Lead*, you can learn more here:

Books:
Daring Greatly
Rising Strong
Braving the Wilderness

Videos (*brenebrown.com/dcvideos*):
The Call to Courage on Netflix
The Power of Vulnerability TED Talk

Learning Lab Videos (*brenebrown.com/dc-learning-labs*):
Why be vulnerable when armor feels safer?
What does vulnerability look like?