

## Bounce Back – Courage

This term we start Bounce Back by looking at what frightens us and how we can develop more courage to face our fears and overcome them. Courage means feeling frightened (because you might get hurt, you might fail, you might be rejected or humiliated) but doing it anyway. Being brave is not ‘having no fear,’ it is about not letting fear beat you. Fear can be very important to keep us safe and should not be ignored, however many fears are actually anxiety (feeling nervous) about something that *might* happen and we often make these worse by exaggerating them in our minds.

What can we do to help overcome our fears and nervousness? Many of the Bounce Back skills help. You can do a reality check – think about the risks and the dangers. Are your fears justified or exaggerated? You can try concentrating on the positive things that could come from overcoming your fears (such as more confidence, progress, respect from others). You can try remembering times when you have been able to act with courage in the past and use helpful thinking (e.g. most people would feel nervous in this situation, not just you). For some people it is about going slowly, learning the skills and taking things one step at a time. For others, it is about using ‘tough talk’ and say to yourself “just do it!”, accepting that mistakes are part of learning.

Using our bodies can also help us manage our fears and worries. When we are nervous, our heart beats faster, our stomach churns and we may have sweaty palms. Recognising these symptoms can help us to name what is going on for us and then to take action. Using breathing techniques aimed at focusing attention on the breath coming in and going out of the body has a calming effect on our heart rate and also our thoughts. There are many great apps that can be used with children and adults alike to develop skills in calming body and mind and standing up to anxiety rather than be overwhelmed by it or avoiding parts of life so you don’t have to feel those difficult feelings. *Smiling mind* and *My Calm Beat* are two apps to try.

Many ordinary things make us feel a bit scared or anxious and these things are different from one person to the next. This means that courage is an everyday thing for most of us – trying something new, meeting people, taking a test. Each time you overcome a fear you become braver and more able to face other fears with confidence.