

# Our Family Is

## Overview

In this activity, families will consider how each family member has demonstrated courage in the past. Next, families will use testimony to discuss how others have demonstrated courage when faced with extreme adversity and talk through ways they could use courage to help others. Finally, family members will use a card game to explore other positive qualities that help define who they are as a family.

## Starting the Conversation at Home

This family activity is grounded in skills of social-emotional learning and connects with themes from the inspirational story of Lisa Jura in “Hold On to Your Music” (K–2) and “Lisa of Willesden Lane” (3–5). Using your family’s own unique attributes and identity as a backdrop, family members can reflect and make connections between their own experiences and the SEL competencies aligned with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). These competencies include:

- **Self-Awareness** concentrates on understanding your emotions and thoughts and how they influence your behavior. Skills include self-perception, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.
- **Self-Management** emphasizes your ability to regulate your emotions and behaviors in different situations, as well as how to set and work toward goals. Skills include impulse control, executive function, stress management, and self-discipline.
- **Responsible Decision-Making** is the ability to make positive choices and take responsibility for positive and negative outcomes. Skills include identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, and reflection.
- **Social Awareness** focuses on your ability to empathize with others. Skills include empathy, appreciating differences, and respect.



- **Relationship Skills** revolve around your ability to relate well to others. Skills include communicating clearly, listening, cooperation, resisting negative pressure, resolving conflicts, and supporting one another.

Below are short tips for getting your child and family engaged and connected.

- Lean into your child's experiences and knowledge. Even at a young age, children connect with concepts that are universal, like courage, family, kindness, and perseverance.
- Help family members connect experience and emotion. Sometimes younger family members may need support with vocalizing how they are feeling or experiences that connect that they want to share.
- Provide examples or stories. Helping young family members connect through short personal stories or other examples can help encourage them to share and build confidence.

## Discuss

Begin the conversation with your family by asking how they might define the word "courage." An example definition of courage might be *"the ability to confront pain, fear, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation."* As everyone shares ideas, help family members see that courage can take many forms by asking for examples. Help affirm examples by explaining that there is no act of courage too big or too small. You might even share examples like working up the courage to introduce yourself to someone new at school or telling the truth even when it might not be easy.

Then, provide family members with a sheet of paper and something to write with. Invite each member of the family to share examples of times when they demonstrated courage; explain that these could be big or small examples. When everyone is finished drawing their example, invite each family member to share their courage story. As someone shares, you can encourage questions that build connections like:

- How did you feel when you were demonstrating courage?
- Did you learn something from the experience?
- Did your courageous act help someone else? How so?

You can also remind each family member that it can sometimes be hard to be courageous, but it is an important trait for all of us to have, regardless of our age.

## Watch

One way to help your child and family members make connections between courage and historical/current events is by using testimony. Viewing testimonies or stories from those who have survived and persevered through great adversity can help inspire others to act in courageous ways. Begin by watching the following clip from Alice Boddy ([1:22](#)), a Holocaust survivor who was rescued on the Kindertransport. In this clip of testimony, Alice discusses her inner strength and courage as she left

her family and set out on her own in order to survive. After watching and listening to Alice describe her experience, consider the following questions as a family:

- How does Alice's experience connect with the theme of courage?
- How did Alice and her family demonstrate bravery and perseverance in the face of adversity?
- What emotions do you think Alice was experiencing as she told her story? Did Alice demonstrate courage in sharing her story? How?

**Note:** For more on the Kindertransport, use the background information included in this activity. For additional resources, testimonies of courage, and other "Hold On to Your Music" activities, please visit [www.teachingwithtestimony.com](http://www.teachingwithtestimony.com).

## Act

Finally, ask each family member to go back to their courage drawing. Invite each person to brainstorm a few other positive characteristics about themselves. Encourage family members to think about things they have done or said over the last few weeks to help think of traits. As each person is finishing, remind family members that while each person is their own individual, you also make up a larger team full of positive qualities. You are a family with your own unique identity!

To explore what makes your family special in a fun and unique way, follow the directions below.

- Cut up the *Family Cards* on the following page and place them face down in front of you.
- Ask a family member to select one randomly, turn it over, and read it aloud.
- Then, work as a team to think of ways your family has demonstrated the theme or value.
- As you brainstorm examples to finish the phrase, record your ideas on the card.
- Continue until all cards are complete.

You can now use your completed *Family Cards* to create a poem called "Our Family Is," which is a poem that celebrates your family's identity. Take a look at the *Our Family Is Poem Template* included in this activity. The poem will begin with your first names and include all the "who" statements that you just brainstormed together.

Before filling out the template, work with your family to arrange your "We are a family who..." cards in an order of your choice. Then collaborate to complete the *Family Bio Poem Template*. Fill in each "who" sentence stem to match the order you chose in the step above, and then finish each one with one or more of the ideas from your *Family Cards*. Once each line in the template is filled in, read your poem together as a family. Are there any words you would like to add, take out, or change? Also consider other ways you can write your family poem, like on the sidewalk with chalk, or somewhere in your home so you can remind each other daily!

## Background on the Kindertransport

Kindertransport, a German term meaning “children’s transport,” was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts that brought thousands of children to Great Britain from Nazi-held lands between 1938 and 1940. After Kristallnacht, an organized massacre of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, the British government eased immigration restrictions to allow children under the age of 17 to enter Great Britain from Germany and German-annexed territories (including Austria and Czechoslovakia). Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee payment for each child’s care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. It was understood that parents or guardians could not accompany the children, but once the war ended, the children would return to their families. In all, the rescue operation brought about 9,000–10,000 children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain. Some 7,500 of these children were Jewish. Many children from the children’s transport program later became citizens of Great Britain or immigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Most of them would never again see their parents, many of whom were murdered during the Holocaust.

**The Willesden Project** is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura’s story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. [Learn more at The Willesden Project.](#)

# Family Cards



FAMILY HANDOUT

<p>We Are a Family Who is <b>Generous</b></p>	<p>We Are a Family Who is <b>Courageous</b></p>	<p>We Are a Family Who is <b>Kind</b></p>
<p>We Are a Family Who <b>Perseveres</b></p>	<p>We Are a Family Who <b>Tells the truth</b></p>	<p>We Are a Family Who <b>Helps out</b></p>
<p>We Are a Family Who is <b>(complete on your own)</b></p>		

# Our Family is Poem Template



FAMILY HANDOUT

**First Names:**

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We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we:

We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we:

We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we:

We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we:

We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we:

We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we:

We are a family who is \_\_\_\_\_ because we: