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When asked to think of courage, the images that generally come to mind are that of a soldier standing strong in the heat of battle, a firefighter crawling into a collapsing house to save a young child, or possibly even a cancer patient on his deathbed keeping a smile on his face and thanking God for every day he has left. While these are all great examples, true courage can be found in any degree. There are daily displays of courage that perpetually go unnoticed, especially those exhibited by the younger generations. Today, the issues of peer pressure and conformity among teens are more dominant than ever. Teenage morals are diminishing with each day that passes. One way that teens are courageous in this modern age is by maintaining a sense of individualism and standing by their beliefs.

Although it's cliché, "standing up for what we believe in" is an even bigger issue today. Kids feel a constant pressure to become "popular" and have more friends. Even the rebellious loners, that claim they don't need anyone, want to have friends. Subconsciously, all humans have a basic need for love, and in teens this is perceived as a desire for popularity.

When you're trying to be cool, you tend to conform to what everyone else is saying. Thus, most teens see it as almost impossible to truly express themselves. As a result, individuality is becoming extinct. If you are completely pro-life, but you're with a group of people discussing how pro-choice they are, it would take courage to speak up and defend your viewpoint. In most cases, the group might respect you more if you do this, but many kids don't understand this, and they choose instead to conform.

Today, it takes courage just to be different. It takes courage for a fourteen year old girl to say no when a boy she likes offers her a drink. It takes courage for a seventeen year old boy to tell his friends to stop picking on the boy in the wheelchair. It takes courage for a jock to admit that he enjoys ballet.

It takes courage to stand out, to do what is right.

It has become so easy to just conform. These days, it is socially acceptable, even "normal", to simply do what everyone else is doing. Unfortunately for teens, what everyone else is doing is not always best. When teens make poor choices together, they are forced to accept the consequences together. The smart teens recognize this, and they have the courage to make the right decisions. The stereotype of teens as reckless, rebellious youngsters is unfair to those that try so hard to avoid that image. These kids deserve applause, not labels.

So really, courage is relative. Relative to the time period, to the age group, to the situation, and to so many more things. People need to start recognizing how many teenagers go through life exhibiting courage on a daily basis. You don't have to be a soldier or firefighter to show courage. These people are indeed courageous, but those people that have the strength to speak up and stand out also deserve some recognition.