

ADVENTURES with **COURAGE**

HELLO!
I'M COURAGE



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This book is a compilation of stories written by the Council on Chemical Abuse Prevention staff. We hope you will use these stories as a conversation starter with the children in your life!

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THE ADVENTURES OF COURAGE THE LION

This is the story of a fantabulous lion named Courage. On the day he entered the world, he roared the bravest little roar his mother had ever heard, and she instantly knew to name him Courage. But do not let his name fool you.

Courage does not always feel very brave and sometimes, he does not know what to do and he even makes the wrong choices. Courage's bravery shines when he takes time to learn from his mistakes and when he tries to do the right thing, even when others might tease him. Courage acts very brave when he helps the people around him. No one is perfect and no one will act brave all the time, but the more we try and the more we learn, the easier it becomes to be brave.

Courage lives in the city of Lionsville. For Courage, Lionsville is the perfect size city.

It is not a big city with hundreds of people hustling along the sidewalks and tons of traffic in the streets. It is not a tiny city with nothing around for miles. Lionsville is just the right size. Courage knows most of his neighbors and there are plenty of places to go with his family and friends. Courage loves to walk or ride his bike to his best friend Lorenzo's house, Drug Free Park, and the King of Purrsa Mall. He also loves spending summer days at his favorite place, Breathe Easy Beach. Courage lives in an apartment with his Mama, Auntie Maria, and baby cousin, Rashawn.

On most days, Courage enjoys his fun, adventurous life. But life can be stressful too. Courage worries sometimes about his grades, fitting in at middle school, and trying to avoid peer pressure. He hates it when his mom and auntie argue about not having enough money.

The following are stories of Courage's best adventures. Read along to discover the ways Courage keeps himself safe and helps his friends along the way.

Let Courage bring out the bravery in you!

CHAPTER ONE

COURAGE VISITS POPPI



As the sun started to peek through Courage's bedroom window, he could feel the sunlight on his cheeks. Suddenly, Courage popped out of bed shouting, "Oh no! I'm going to be late for school!"

But as he got up, he quickly remembered, "It's Saturday and the first day of summer vacation!" Courage laid back down letting this amazing revelation sink in. Excitedly, Courage thought to himself, "There's nothing to do today but eat cereal, watch Saturday morning cartoons, and find some fun outside."

The visions of his Saturday fun day were interrupted by his mother shouting.

“Courage! Couuurragge! Are you up??!”

“Yes, Mama. I am up!” Courage shouted back.

“Ok, hurry up and get out here. I have chores for you on this beautiful Saturday morning!”

“Well, there goes my Saturday fun day,” Courage mumbled.

“What did you say, I couldn’t hear you,” Mama replied.

“N-n-nothing Mama, I’m coming!”

Courage washed up, brushed his teeth, and got dressed. With a little less pep in his step now, he headed out to get some breakfast and find out what chores his mother had lined up for him.

Courage walked into the kitchen. Rashawn sat in his highchair, tossing his scrambled eggs to the floor while giggling, as Auntie Maria kept bending over to pick them up. Courage could not help but laugh.

Mama handed Courage a great big bowl of his favorite chocolatey cereal and said, “Here, go eat your cereal and watch a few cartoons. When you finish rinse out your bowl and I will give you the chore list.”

“Thanks, Mama!”

“Maybe this day will not be all that bad,” Courage thought.

As Courage sat watching cartoons, his mother came in and explained that she had gotten called into work for a few hours this morning. Courage’s mother is a nurse, and he is so proud that his mama helps people.

“I hung the chore list on the fridge. When you finish your chores, you can find something fun to do. Just make sure you tell Auntie Maria everything you plan to do today. When I get home, we can order pizza and watch a movie,” his mother said.

“Ok,” Courage replied, “Thanks, Mama! See you later, don’t work too hard.”

Mama kissed Courage on the cheek and left for work. Courage finished his cereal and headed for the kitchen to look at his chore list. He hoped it was not too long, because he really wanted to have fun today.

To his surprise, Courage discovered there were only two items on the list:

1. Take out all the trash
2. Take the bag of groceries in the pantry to Poppi’s house.

Poppi, Courage's grandmother, lived in the neighborhood near the basketball courts at Drug Free Park. Courage packed the groceries and his basketball in his backpack and headed towards the door. Before running out he shouted, "Auntie Maria I'm leaving for Poppi's house and then I'm going to shoot some hoops at the basketball courts. I'll be home by lunchtime."

"OK," Auntie replied. "Have fun and be safe."

Courage hopped on his bike, put on his helmet, and sped off towards Poppi's house. Courage zipped around the corner near the basketball courts and started to slow down as he noticed a group of kids standing near the hoops. Courage could see they were inhaling on something, but he did not know what they were doing. The object had the shape of a cigarette and Courage noticed a little smoke, but it did not look like a cigarette, and it did not smell like a cigarette. Courage did not recognize any of the kids hanging out, so he kept on riding until he reached Poppi's house.

Running in the front door, Courage yelled, "Poppi I'm here, where are you?" and slammed the door behind him. Poppi called from her living room and scolded him, teasingly: "How many times have I told you not to slam my front door?"

Courage responded by giving Poppi a great big hug. Poppi smiled and asked Courage to put the groceries on her kitchen table. "I got your favorite Dunkaroo snacks," Poppi said "Grab a pack or two while you are in there."

"Great!! Thanks, Poppi, you're my favorite!" Courage hurried back to the living room to visit with Poppi, but he could not stop thinking about the kids he had noticed by the hoops. Poppi knew by the look on Courage's face that something was bothering him. She patted the seat next to her on the couch and said, "Sit right here and tell me what's bothering you, Courage."

Courage knew that Poppi would be the best person to ask about what he saw at the hoops. Poppi seemed to know everything, always had the right answers, and could make Courage feel better about anything going on in his life. Courage could always count on Poppi. So, he

sat down and told Poppi all about the kids at the basketball court. Of course, Poppi knew exactly what Courage had witnessed. She grabbed her laptop and pulled up some articles and pictures. Poppi showed Courage a picture of an electronic nicotine delivery system device, usually called a vape pen. "That's exactly what they were using." Courage told Poppi.



“This is an electronic cigarette,” Poppi explained “People use these to vape. An electronic cigarette uses a battery that heats up liquid, which turns it to an aerosol that is breathed into the lungs. The liquid is not water. People are not inhaling steam.

When a person vapes, they ingest an aerosol that contains heavy metals like nickel, tin and lead and hundreds of other chemicals that can cause cancer and other lung diseases. The more a person vapes, the more they increase their risk of becoming very sick. Both cigarettes and electronic cigarettes contain nicotine. Do you know what nicotine is?” Poppi asked Courage.

“It’s the addictive chemical found in cigarettes,” Courage responded.

“Yes! You are right, Courage,” Poppi said.” Nicotine is a stimulant, which means it increases breathing and heart rate. Smoking and vaping are both harmful to the lungs and heart because when the heart beats faster it needs more oxygen but smoking and vaping prevent oxygen from getting to the heart. Over time, a lack of oxygen damages the heart. The younger a person is when they begin to smoke or vape, the more likely they are to become addicted to nicotine. Developing an addiction to nicotine also increases the risk of developing an addiction to other substances.”

Courage sat silent for a few minutes, thinking about all that Poppi had just said.

“What are you thinking, Courage?” Poppi asked.

After a few more seconds of silence, Courage finally spoke. “I’m thinking that the only thing that is safe to put in our lungs is air. I’m also wondering if my friends know how dangerous vaping is, and I want to find a way to let them know.”

Poppi and Courage sat and talked about ways that Courage could spread the word about the dangers of smoking and vaping. “I have the best idea,” Poppi said. “We can make you a t-shirt to wear that explains why smoking is dangerous. People will see it and maybe even ask you questions.”

“Yes! Let’s do that!”

Poppi got some supplies and they sat down to begin designing Courage’s shirt. “Coming up with an idea is harder than I thought it would be,” Courage told Poppi. Poppi laughed and agreed. “Let’s ask for some help.”

Courage texted some friends to come over to Poppi’s. Within the hour, Courage and his friends were making t-shirts with Poppi and learning how to keep their bodies safe and strong.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you designed a t-shirt with Courage what would it say or look like?
- 2: Courage felt safe talking to Poppi, who can you talk to in your life when you need to talk?
- 3: Why do you think the kids in the park wanted to try vaping?

WHAT'S IN THE VAPE

Oh No! The scientist mixed up some of the dangerous chemicals found in E-liquid with the Chef's smoothie ingredients. From the pictures below help the chef find the healthy ingredients to finish making his smoothie.



Chef's List

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



COCONUT



NICOTINE



METALS



REAL VANILLA BEAN



VEGETABLE GLYCERIN



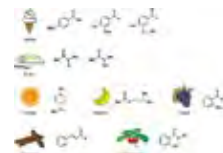
PROPYLENE GLYCOL



MILK



ICE



ARTIFICIAL FLAVORINGS

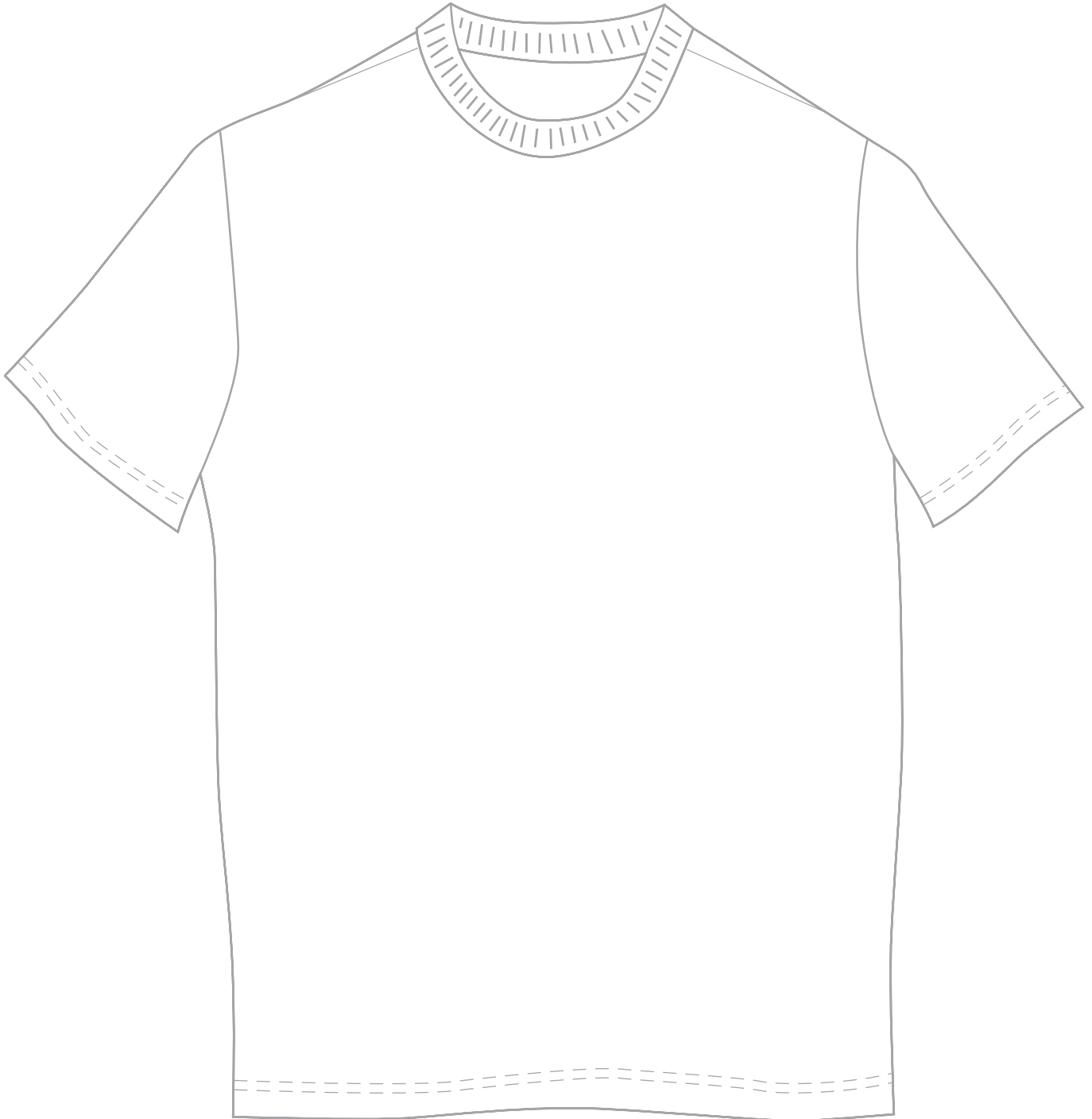


FRESH PINEAPPLE

DESIGN YOUR COURAGE T-SHIRT

Use this page to design
your own t-shirt as
discussed in question #1.

ACTIVITY ONE VAPING



CHAPTER TWO

COURAGE'S WALK IN THE PARK



On a beautiful warm, sunny day, Courage the Lion, decided to go to Drug Free Park for his daily walk. Courage loves to walk because he knows that it is a good way to exercise and stay healthy. As he got close to the park, he noticed kids playing on the swings, sliding down the sliding board, running, and playing in the sandbox. The chatter of adults and laughter of children having a good time filled Courage with joy and put a smile on his face.

Courage has lots of friends, and he hoped to see some of his middle school classmates at the park. He quickly spotted Tommy, Miguel, Maria, and Suzy huddled by the see-saw, but they did not see him. As Courage walked towards them, he noticed a boy he had never met before offering Miguel what looks like a Tic-Tac. Courage sped up his pace in hopes of stopping Miguel before he put it in his mouth. Courage was very concerned. He knows that kids should never put anything like this in their mouths, because it might not be safe for their bodies and could cause serious harm.

When the unfamiliar boy saw Courage coming towards them, he ran away. Miguel immediately threw the item to the ground. But it was too late; Courage saw it lying in the tall grass. As he suspected, it is not a Tic Tac, but some type of pill. Tommy, Miguel, Maria, and Suzy were surprised to see Courage, and they became uneasy. He is their friend, and they know he would not approve of the boy with the Tic-Tac. Courage invited them to walk with him to the pavilion, and the friends sat together on a bench. Courage was worried about his friends. "You know it's important to keep our bodies healthy," he reminded them.

"I'm healthy," said Tommy. "I get exercise every day!"

"I'm healthy too!" said Maria. "I eat lots of fruits and vegetables."

"I get at least eight hours of sleep every night," Suzy joined in.

Courage smiled at his friends. He was glad they are taking such good care of themselves. Then looked at Miguel. "Do you remember what the lady from the Council on Chemical Abuse or COCA taught us when she visited our school?" Courage asked.

Miguel shyly responded, "She said you should not put anything in your mouth without the permission of a parent."

"That's right," said Courage. "And do you remember that she told us what a pharmacist is?"



Miguel responded, "Yes! I remember. A pharmacist is someone who gives you medicine."

"Yup!" said Courage. "Pharmacists are 'medicine experts'. They are responsible for preparing the medicine and giving it to the person that received permission from the doctor to take it. They teach the person how to safely take their medicine."

"Yes, I remember that lesson," Maria shouted, "A doctor can also teach a person how to take medicine safely."

"That's right!" Courage responded.

"So can your mom and dad," Tommy said.

"And the school nurse," Miguel added.

"Awesome!" said Courage. "We all have to remember never to put anything in our mouths unless we have permission from a trusted adult. Because, sometimes kids who act like they want to be your friend will give you something that looks like candy. But, it's really something that is bad for you, like a pill or medicine. That's why we should always ask an adult before putting anything in our mouths."

"Do you remember?" Courage continued, "That the lady from COCA told us what medicine is."

"I know what medicine is," Tommy said. "It's used to treat an illness."

"Yeah," said Suzy. "It helps you feel better when you're sick."

"And it can help you if you get hurt or have an injury," Maria added. Courage smiled. He was proud to have such smart friends. But then he frowned.

"We have to remember that medicine can look like candy, just like what the boy gave to Miguel," Courage said. "It looked like a Tic-Tac, but it was actually a pill."

If Miguel had eaten that pill, he would have become very sick and might even have been rushed to the hospital!" Courage shook his head sadly. "Have you ever noticed that many medicines look like candy?" he asked.

Tommy, Miguel, Maria, and Suzy nodded and looked down. They were all thinking about what could have happened to Miguel if he had swallowed that pill. "Do you remember that the lady from COCA told us that it is easy to confuse a pill with candy because a pill may



look your favorite candy,” Courage reminded his friends. “It may be the same size, color and even the same shape. We need to learn how to tell the difference between candy and medicine, so we do not get sick and end up in the hospital.”

“I remember that!” said Suzy. “The lady taught us about medicine safety.”

“Yes,” said Courage. “Do you think it’s safe to leave medicine on the kitchen table?”

“No!” his friends all shouted together.

“My mother has all her medicines in a special lock box. Even I can’t open it,” said Tommy.

“That’s good,” said Courage. “We all want to be safe. I remember that the lady told us never to share our medicine with someone else, even if they have the same illness we had.”

“Right!” said Suzy. “It’s not safe to share medicines that have been prescribed for you by a doctor. And it’s against the law!”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it a good idea to share your medicine with your friends?
2. Is it ok to put things in your mouth if it looks like candy even if your friends tell you?
3. Where is a safe place to put all your medicines?

MEDICATION SAFETY

NEVER:

- Share your medications with someone else
- Put something in your mouth that looks like candy without asking a parent/guardian
- Take medicine unless it is given by an adult

ALWAYS:

- Make sure medicines and vitamins are stored in a lock box.
- Take medicine as prescribed by the doctor

ALWAYS:
Store medicines and vitamins out of reach of younger children, or in a lockbox.



ACTIVITY TWO

MEDICATION

SAFETY

CANDY OR MEDICINE

Can you tell the difference?

DRAW A LINE TO THE CORRECT PICTURE



Mints

Blue Pills

Smarties Candies

Tums Antacids

Gummy Vitamins

Gummy Candies

Adult Vitamins

Jelly Beans

Cinnamon Candies

Advil

Pink Pills

Good & Plenty Candies



CHAPTER THREE

COURAGE'S


INDEPENDENCE DAY



Courage turned off his light and settled into bed, but he knew he was way too excited to sleep. He felt more excited than he did on Christmas Eve or the night before his birthday.

Tomorrow, Courage would take another leap toward independence! Mama had given him permission to ride his bike to the King of Purrsa Mall with Lorenzo. Staring up at the ceiling, Courage started to feel a little nervous about tomorrow. He did not want to mess anything up. He wanted Mama to trust him, so he could have more independence to do other activities alone. Mama had spent all last week talking to him about decision-making skills, and ways he could refuse if his friends asked him to do something he knew could lead to trouble. Courage lay in bed, reviewing all that Mama had taught him.

According to Mama, before making any decision you must Freeze, so you can pause to reflect about your problem and Think about what your options are and the consequences of your actions. Mama also taught Courage refusal skills.



Refusal skills are different ways to say no. The simplest way to refuse is to simply say “No, Thank You,” but Mama explained it is not always the easiest. Saying no to friends is hard, because we do not want them to tease us, and we do not want to lose friends or make them mad at us. If he feels afraid to say no, Mama taught Courage to Walk Away, Make an Excuse, State the Facts or to come up with a Better Idea.

Courage practiced these skills over and over in his mind. He imagined himself saying “No, Thank You,” if a friend asked him to be mean to another friend. Courage thought about Walking Away if a stranger asked him to try vaping.

Courage also imagined himself Stating the Facts to a friend who wanted him to steal something at the mall. He would tell his friend it is illegal, and he would not want to get arrested.

Lastly, Courage imagined himself coming up with a Better Idea, like going to play basketball rather than trying drugs or alcohol. Falling off to sleep, Courage doubted he would even need any of these skills.

Courage woke up before his alarm. He dressed quickly and ran out to the kitchen to gobble up the breakfast Mama made for his big day. As he rinsed off his dishes, Mama reminded him, “Don’t forget the skills we talked about last week. Stop and think before making a decision, and if you can’t say ‘No,’ there are other ways to keep yourself out of trouble.”

“I remember, Mama,” Courage assured her. “Don’t worry, I won’t let you down. I’ll be home at 2 this afternoon.”

“I’m not worried,” Mama replied. “Keep your phone on, be safe and have fun! I’ll see you this afternoon.”

Courage kissed Mama on the cheek and ran out to meet Lorenzo, who was already waiting at the corner. The boys put on their helmets and took off for the King of Purrsa Mall.

As they started off, Lorenzo slowed down. “Hey Courage, I heard Mikey’s parents went away for the day, and he invited us over. I think we should skip the mall and head to Mikey’s.”

Courage just wanted to go to the mall but now he had a decision to make. Can you help Courage? How can Courage make the right decision? Which refusal skill can Courage use?

Thanks for helping Courage! Once Courage used a refusal skill, Lorenzo responded, “Ok, ok, Courage. Let’s go to the mall.”

“That was easy enough,” Courage thought as he rode off with Lorenzo.

Arriving at the mall, the boys decided they were hungry from the bike ride and their first stop would be for a pretzel and soda. They locked up their bikes and headed toward the pretzel shop. But, as they walked into the mall, Courage noticed his friend Cora by the entrance, hanging out with some kids he did not recognize. Cora waved for him and Lorenzo to come over.

“Hey Cora! What’s up?” Courage asked.

“Not much,” Cora said. “We are just hanging out.”

Courage noticed Cora’s friends were passing around a vape pen. Cora got the pen and offered it to Courage and Lorenzo.

“Not again,” Courage thought. Help Courage out. How can Courage make the right decision? Which refusal skill can Courage use?

Thanks for helping Courage, again!

After Courage used another refusal skill, Cora said, “No big deal, Courage.

Have fun today.” Courage and Lorenzo finally headed to get that pretzel.

Courage and Lorenzo enjoyed their pretzel then went into the different stores. They looked at clothing, bought some bubble gum at the candy store, and played a bunch of games at the arcade.

“What a great day!” Lorenzo told Courage.

“The best!” Courage responded. “Come on Lorenzo let’s head to Game Stop before going home.”

As the boys ran off towards Game Stop, they spotted Mikey and some other friends.

“Hey Courage, Lorenzo! I thought you guys were coming over to my house,”
Mikey shouted.

Courage and Lorenzo walked over to Mikey. “We thought about it, but we made plans a while ago to hang out here today,” Courage explained.

“What are you guys doing here?” Lorenzo asked.



“We got bored, so we decided to see what was happening here,” Mikey said
“We are going to see about stealing some older video games. Come with us. It will be fun!”

Courage could not believe he needed to make another tough decision. Being responsible is hard work, he realized. Lorenzo pulled Courage aside and asked, “What do you think, Courage? We can go and not steal anything. We were headed there anyway.”

“I don’t know, Lorenzo. Seems like more trouble than we need,” Courage said.

How can Lorenzo and Courage make the right decision? What refusal skills can the boys use to steer clear of trouble with Mikey?

Thanks for helping Courage and Lorenzo make a good decision. After the drama with Mikey, the boys decided they had had enough excitement for one day, and they left the mall to bike ride home.

“Thank you for a great day Lorenzo, and for sticking by me today. Thanks for being a great friend,” Courage said.

“Any time, Courage,” Lorenzo replied. “And thank you for helping me make good choices today. I had a great time. Let’s head home.”

Mama sat at the kitchen table waiting for Courage.

“Hey Mama, I’m home,” Courage shouted as he entered the front door, and ran to the kitchen to talk to Mama about his day.

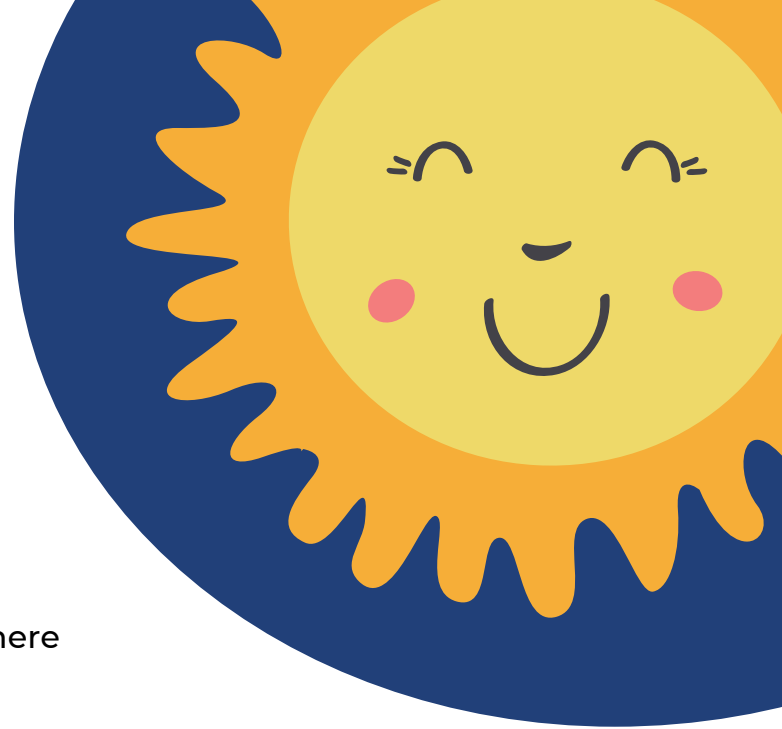
“So, tell me about your trip to the mall with Lorenzo,” Mama asked.

Courage told her all about his adventure, and how he needed to Freeze and make decisions all day long. Courage thanked Mama for teaching him refusal skills and told her how they helped him to avoid trouble today.

“I’m so proud of you, Courage,” Mama said, as she hugged him tight.

“Thanks Mama! But, boy, being an adult is hard work. I think I’ll stay a kid for a little while longer if that’s ok with you.”

Mama laughed and told Courage that it was fine with her.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1: Think of a time you made the wrong decision, what could you have done differently?
- 2: Why do you think it is hard to say no to our friends?
3. When your friends pressure you to do something you do not want to do is called what?



ACTIVITY THREE

REFUSAL SKILLS

PRACTICE YOUR SKILLS

Match the description with the refusal skill you can use to say no to using tobacco and other drugs.

The first one is done for you!

Ignore

Broken Record

State the Facts

Make an Excuse

Steer Clear

Walk Away

Say, "No"

Better Idea

- 1 "Thanks, but I don't want any."
- 2 "No, no, no, no thank you no!"
- 3 "Ugh, I can't smoke my mom is picking me up soon."
- 4 Max calls your name and starts coming towards you. You quickly turn away.
- 5 Just smile and walk away.
- 6 "Hey, let's leave and go play outside instead!"
- 7 You get a text Max is bringing alcohol, so you decide to skip the party.
- 8 "No, if I get caught, I won't be able to play soccer."

To see the answers for this activity, please visit cocaberks.org/courage.

CHAPTER FOUR

A BIRTHDAY ADVENTURE WITH COURAGE



Friends are so important to Courage. When he gets the opportunity to be with his friends, he almost never turns it down. Recently, Courage was invited to his friend Lorenzo's 13th birthday party. He was so excited that Lorenzo would now be a teenager! He decided to buy a gift he knew Lorenzo would love: a baseball cap from his favorite team, the Philadelphia Eagles.

Courage knows everything about Lorenzo. Including that his family had been having a difficult time. Since his dad lost his job due to the COVID 19 pandemic a few months ago, Lorenzo has grown distant. That was another reason Courage was excited to be invited to the party. He had not seen Lorenzo in a while and wanted to catch up.

On his way to Lorenzo's house, Courage began to reminisce about the good old days with his friends, cracking jokes and laughing so hard that their stomachs hurt.

When Courage arrived at Lorenzo's house on 123 Stay Healthy Lane, the two friends were excited to see one another. But as he entered Lorenzo's house, he smelled a strong odor, which he knew to be marijuana. He looked around and noticed DJ, Mike, Gabi and Michelle, their best friends from middle school, sitting in the living room.

Courage felt a bit worried when he realized that Lorenzo's parents weren't home, but he smiled as his friends all greeted him warmly.

"Hi Courage, how are you? It's been a while," said Miguel. But then he asked, "Do you want to smoke a joint with us?"

Not knowing what to say, Courage immediately responded, "Um, how about later?"

Courage started to feel uneasy. If his friends asked him to smoke later, what would he say? He didn't want to smoke, but if he said no, his friends might think he's a wimp.

Then, he remembered a presentation they had at their school last year by Sonia, from the Council on Chemical Abuse, or COCA, who talked about the dangers of marijuana.

And in that instant Courage got the courage! He asked his friends, "Isn't it illegal to smoke marijuana?"

"Oh Courage, don't worry!" Lorenzo replied. "We're in my house, and no one will see us."

"Do you guys remember that marijuana presentation we had in school last year?" Courage asked.

"Oh yeah, I do," answered Gabi.

"I kinda remember that too," said Michelle. "Didn't they say that marijuana affects how the brain grows?"

"You mean, brain development?" Courage asked.

"Yeah, that's it!" said Miguel. "I remember learning that smoking marijuana can make it harder to remember new things at school."

"You're right!" said Lorenzo. "Sonia, the COCA lady, even said that if you start smoking at our age, we can become...what's that 'A' word? Oh yeah, I remember...addicted. It's when you want to stop using and can't."

"Yeah, you're right, that's when the person knows they need help from a doctor in order to quit," Courage said. "I remember thinking, I never want to do drugs because I didn't want to mess with my goals after high school."

“You’re so right Courage!” responded DJ. “The COCA lady told us that marijuana effects your memory and motivation and can even cause depression and impairs your judgment. Smoking marijuana would definitely ruin my chances of getting the football scholarship I’ve always dreamed of.”

“Oh wow!” Gabi said. “I want to study to be a doctor someday, but if I become addicted to marijuana, I won’t be able to take care of the patients.”

“Well,” Miguel said, “even though I’m not going to college, I still want to be carpenter just like my dad.”

“Yes,” Courage said. “Marijuana can ruin our dreams for the future, no matter what those dreams are. If I get caught smoking marijuana and the police are called, I can be criminally charged, and I certainly don’t want that on my record!”

“Hmm, that’s pretty scary stuff. I’m going to think twice about smoking marijuana now,” said Gabi.

“Me too,” said DJ. “My parents would feel let down too, but so would my football teammates. The COCA lady said kids who inhale marijuana smoke risk damaging their lungs. If that happens, they’ll have difficulty breathing and keeping up with the team. She also mentioned that some kids our age don’t think about the consequences of smoking marijuana because they’re so focused on having fun.”

“But it’s not always about having fun!” said Michelle. “Sometimes we’re pressured into doing something we don’t want to do too. And even though we know it’s wrong, we’re afraid of looking stupid in front of our friends and we give in.”

“Yeah,” said Gabi. “I guess that’s why the COCA lady said it was important to make healthy decisions. When we learn to say ‘no’ to drugs, we’re keeping our mind and body healthy.”

Courage added, “And talking about keeping your body healthy, we learned that Marijuana can be harmful to the heart & lungs. And that marijuana contains over 400 chemicals that are known to be toxic or poisonous.”

“Oh yeah, she talked a lot about one of the chemicals,” said Miguel.

“It’s something called, tet, tetrahid, um, cannon? Oh wait! I remember, its tetrahydrocannabinol, it’s THC for short.”



“Yes, she said THC is the chemical that’s naturally found in marijuana and causes the person to feel high,” Lorenzo replied. “It’s the reason why people smoke marijuana”.

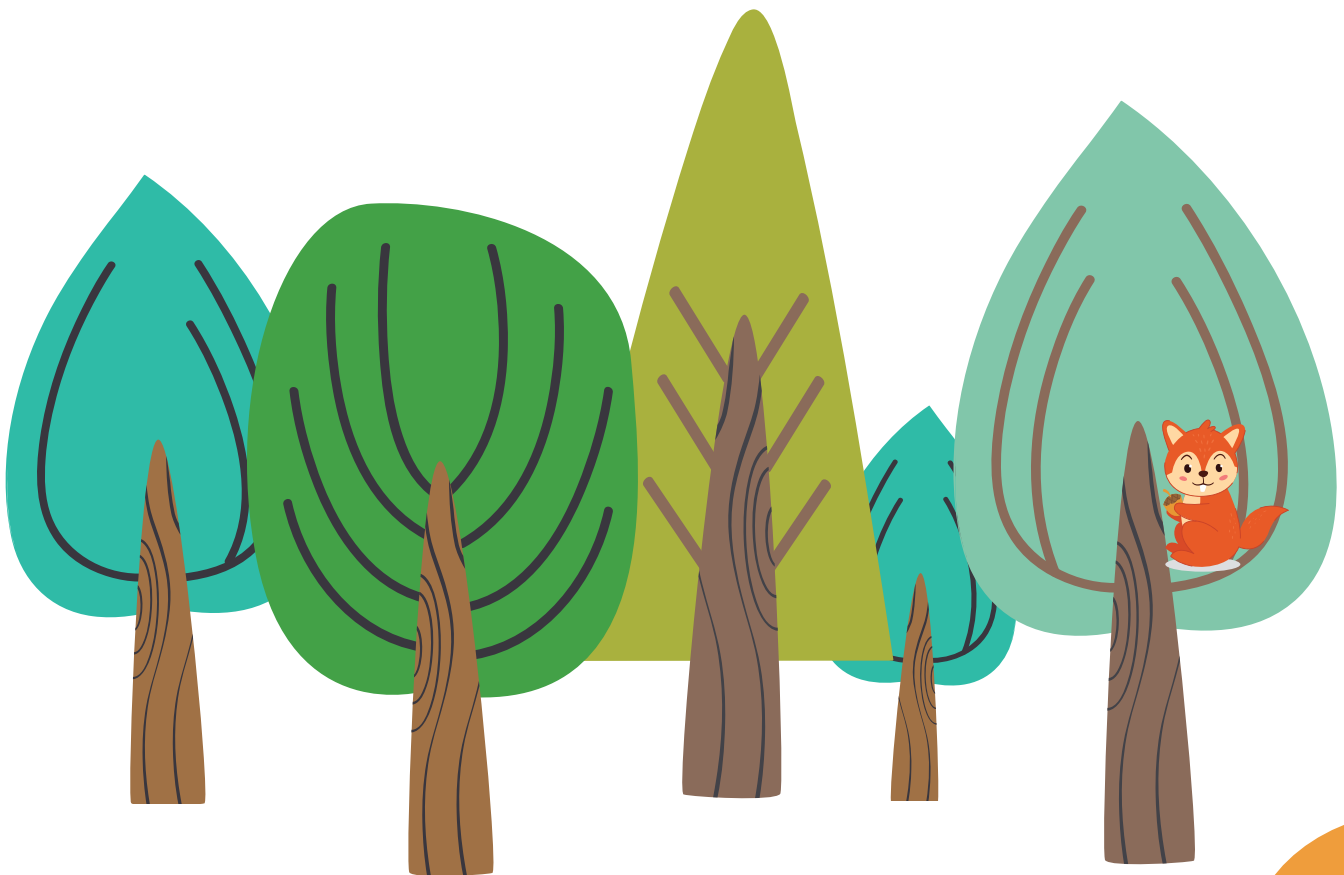
“You guys remember a lot,” said Gabi. “But do you also remember that smoking marijuana can be really dangerous because it might be mixed with other drugs, without the person even knowing? If that happens, smoking marijuana can cause someone to overdose and maybe even die.”

Without hesitation, Lorenzo put down the marijuana joint. “Hey guys, I have a better idea,” he said. “Why don’t we go for a swim in my pool instead. It’s nice and hot out, anyway.”

“A better idea? Wait! That’s called a Refusal skill, guys”, shouted Gabi. “Do you remember? The COCA lady taught us different ways to say ‘no’ to drugs. That’s pretty cool, Lorenzo. You actually used a skill, and you didn’t even realize it.”

“Well, I may not have realized that, but what I do realize is that I have the best friends. And this is the best birthday ever,” said Lorenzo.

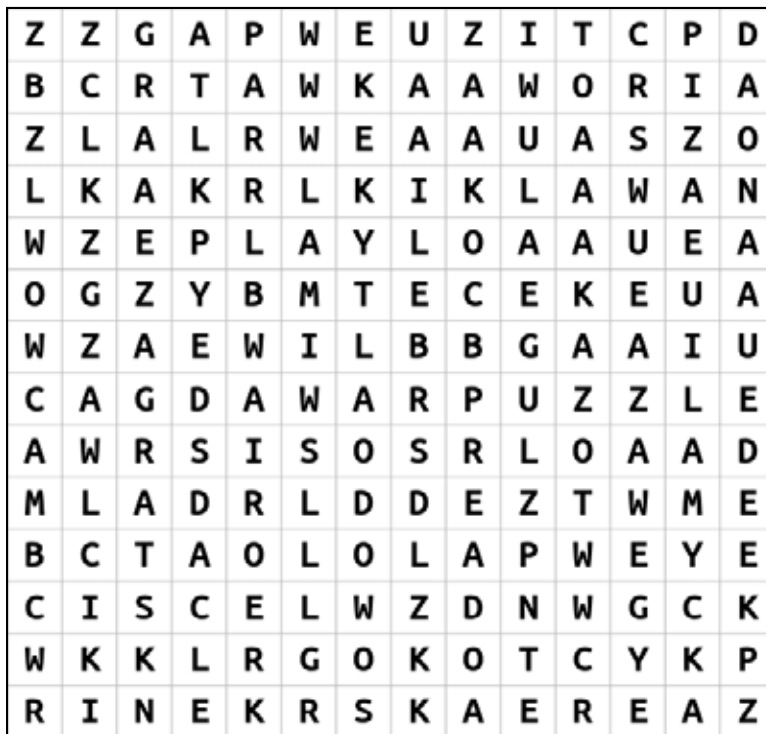
“And this is turning out to be the best party ever!” shouted Courage as he and his friends headed outside.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is Marijuana safe to smoke because it grows naturally?
2. What parts of the body is marijuana harmful to?
3. What is a good decision if a friend invites you to their house and they are using marijuana?

MARIJUANA/DECISION MAKING WORD SEARCH



Find the words below in the word search puzzle:

WALK
STARGAZE
PLAY
SWIM
DRAW
PUZZLE
COLOR
DANCE
READ
BIKE

Play this puzzle online at thewordsearch.com/puzzle/1227781/



ACTIVITY FOUR MARIJUANA/ DECISION MAKING

BRAIN MAZE

Take your time, use your brain,
and make the correct decisions
to get out of the maze.



To see the answers for this activity, please visit cocaberks.org/courage.

CHAPTER FIVE

COURAGE GOES TO BREATHE EASY BEACH



Courage's adventures were coming to an end. Over the summer, he was able to visit with his family and friends and learn some valuable lessons along the way. Courage learned the dangers of vaping when he was visiting his Poppi's house, and he learned and practiced his refusal skills at Lorenzo's house. Thankfully, he made healthy choices and had the courage to stand up for himself and his goals.

Courage did not like the idea of his adventures coming to an end. Sometimes, Courage has trouble with change. He enjoyed his time with his family and friends and his adventures at the park and King of Purrsa. But now the summer was ending and Courage started to feel overwhelmed and even sick to his stomach.

This happens to Courage when he is feeling stressed. Courage does not like feeling certain feelings. Sometimes, when he gets stressed, he roars at people he loves and cares about. When Courage does not take care of his feelings they can sometimes get "bottled up" inside and he might say or do something he normally would not say or do. This makes him embarrassed.

Courage remembered that he could do something with these uncomfortable feelings, and he thought about how it made him feel better to talk to his Poppi. One night Courage had trouble sleeping because his head was filled with worries about the new school year. Because of the pandemic, the past school year had been so different. Courage missed playing with his friends and being able to sit with them at lunch. He was worried about what the next school year would look like and if he would have to learn virtually or in-person.

Courage decided to meditate. He started to imagine himself at his happy place, which was Breathe Easy Beach. He closed his eyes and imagined the warm sun on his face. Courage loves to hear the waves, and the sound of the sea gulls flying around, and feel the cool breeze. Courage's heart rate started to slow down. He began breathing easier and he felt less stressed.

Courage finds meditation helps him when he is feeling overwhelmed. Courage started mindfulness meditation when he learned he had anxiety. Mindfulness meditation is something that helps Courage stay in the moment and not to worry too far ahead. There are certain things we can control in our lives and there are many things we cannot control. One thing that is important for Courage to remember is that he gets to decide what he will do with his feelings, especially the uncomfortable ones! Courage needs to know that no feeling is permanent.

Courage woke up the next day and felt much better. He called Poppi and began planning a trip to the beach. Courage and Poppi also invited his friends, Sunny and Savannah to join them at Breathe Easy Beach. Poppi and Courage picked up Sunny and Savannah, and headed to the beach. When they arrived, Sunny spotted a sign that said, "Young Lungs at Play."



Everyone was unsure of what this meant. Courage's Poppi informed everyone about the dangers of breathing in cigarette smoke when others smoke around us. Poppi said people used to be able to smoke on the beach, but now it is against the law.

"The Young Lungs at Play signs let people know that smoking isn't allowed," said Poppi. "That keeps children's lungs healthy and safe."

Sunny stepped closer to the sign to get a better look.

"Savannah, don't we have these signs at our playground and at Body Zone?" Sunny asked.



Savannah said, "Oh that's why I recognize them! We have those signs at our parks."

"Well, good thing people can't smoke or vape here," Courage said. "After all it is called Breathe Easy Beach!" The group grabbed their backpacks, beach chairs, umbrellas, and suntan lotion.

Courage and his friends found the perfect spot to lay out their towels and beach chairs. He stopped for a moment, looked around at everyone who was with him, looked up at the clear blue sky, closed his eyes and felt the warm sun on his face. He felt that peaceful and calm feeling he had the night before, when he was imagining that he was in his happy place. Savannah and Sunny were unpacking their bags and beach chairs. Savannah spotted Courage with a smile on his face and his eyes closed and said, "Courage, you look so relaxed. This was a great idea, thanks for inviting us to the beach with you!"

"You're welcome!" Courage said. "I'm so glad you could make it, I really need to be with my friends at my happy place right now. I have been worried about the new school year."

Poppi, Savanna and Sunny sat in their beach chairs and listened to Courage's concerns.

"I feel embarrassed about being worried, and I don't like feeling uncomfortable," Courage said. "Sometimes, I'm not in the mood to talk about it, or I feel weird telling people about it."

"Courage, we understand," Poppi said. "But, we are your family. We accept you for who you are and we accept whatever mood or feelings you are experiencing."



Savannah and Sunny nodded their heads.

Savannah said, "Courage, we know you take pride in being so brave, but no one expects you to be brave 24 hours a day. Please reach out to us whenever you need something or someone to talk to."

Sunny stood up and gave Courage a big hug. "It takes Courage to admit you are not feeling so strong right now," Sunny said. "Sometimes, people think fear and stress are a weakness, but they are real and they happen to everyone. Hey, I have an idea! Let's do some mindfulness here at the beach!"

Sunny led them in a mindfulness meditation.

"The first practice we are going to try is called the Starfish," Sunny said. "Everyone find a place to sit and relax, whether it's on your beach towel or beach chair. Begin by tracing a finger along the outline of the opposite hand in the form of a starfish, taking a deep breath as you trace up and down each finger! Isn't that fun? Next time any of you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed you can do the Starfish and you can think of us at the beach!"

"The next practice helps me feel better when I get worried about taking tests during the school year," Sunny continued "This could help some of you when you get nervous too. We are going to put one hand on our chest and the other hand on our stomach and simply breathe!"

"The third practice is called a grounding technique. We are going to wiggle our toes and bury them in the sand. Grounding techniques help us feel grounded when our minds feel all over the place!"

When they finished, Courage said to Sunny, "Thank you so much for showing these practices to us! This is something I would like to start using." The others agreed.

Poppi said, "Thank you, Sunny! I don't know about the rest of you but I am ready to go swimming in the ocean!"

Poppi loves to be in the water. The water helps keep her grounded. Savannah also loves to be by the water and feels grounded when she goes swimming.

Courage said, "The last one in owes me ice cream!!"

Courage and his friends had a great day at Breathe Easy Beach. Courage has learned valuable lessons this summer in addition to refusal skills and some coping tools with meditation! We cannot always go to the beach when we are feeling stressed, but like Courage, we can picture our happy place when we need it!

When we allow ourselves to feel those uncomfortable feelings and have healthy ways to handle them, the stress eventually settles. We can also help our stress by talking to those we love and trust, like Courage. Just like the glitter in a calming jar, we can get our minds to settle!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which breathing techniques would work for you when you are feeling stressed?
2. What are some ways we can help ourselves relax when we feel overwhelmed?
3. Have you ever listened to guided meditations on YouTube or amazon music?

COURAGE'S MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

Mindfulness activities helped Courage reduce stress and anxiety.
Try Some at home.

Birthday Candle Breaths - Hold out your fingers and pretend they are candles on a birthday cake. Then, take a deep breath and slowly blow out each "candle."

Starfish Breaths - Hold out one hand, palm out, with your fingers spread like a starfish. With the index finger of your other hand, trace the outline of the starfish, breathing slowly in as you trace up a finger, and out as you trace down.

Rocket Breaths - Press your hands together over your heart and countdown to five while you slowly inhale. When you get to five, blast off by exhaling and reaching your arms straight up. When you finish, circle your arms back down and repeat.

Find Your Happy Place - Think of a place where you love to go. It could be the beach, a favorite park, or a beautiful garden. Now, close your eyes and imagine you are there. Think about all the things you might see, hear, smell and feel.

MORE ACTIVITIES FOR STAYING CALM

Blow Bubbles through a hula hoop!

Play the 4, 3, 2, 1 Color Game: Pick 4 colors. Find 4 items of the same color in a room and say them out loud. Then find 3 items of another color and say them out loud. Do the same with two colors, and finally one color.

Enjoy a Quiet Activity: Spend some time alone listening to your favorite music. Get out your art supplies and try drawing or painting.

Kids Yoga: Stretch out your feelings! Try out kids' yoga videos like these surf & swim poses youtu.be/XLIXfjUztco and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" youtu.be/XLIXfjUztco from Bari Koral.

Meditation: Listen to meditation and sleep stories on You Tube, like these relaxing beach-themed stories found here youtu.be/9hbSsuss3YA

ACTIVITY FIVE

MINDFULNESS/ STRESS

IDEAS FOR A BETTER DAY BOX

- Take any box and decorate it using paints, markers, glitter or pictures.
- Use the label below or design your own to place on the front of your box
- Add healthy items to help YOU make your day better!

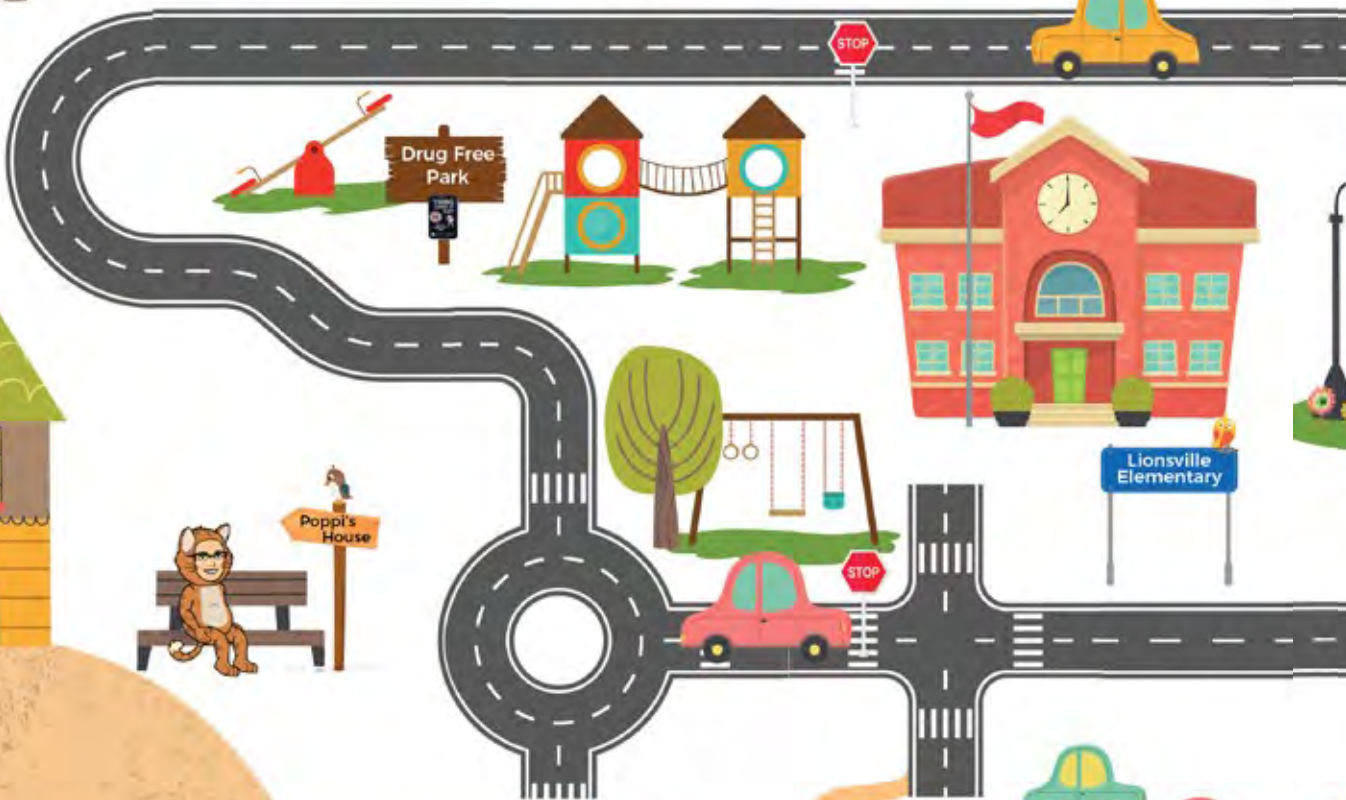


In the boxes below write down something you do that makes you feel good, a positive reminder of how special you are, what you can do to help cope with a feeling.

Welcome to



King of Purrsa Mall



Lionsville Elementary



Poppi's House



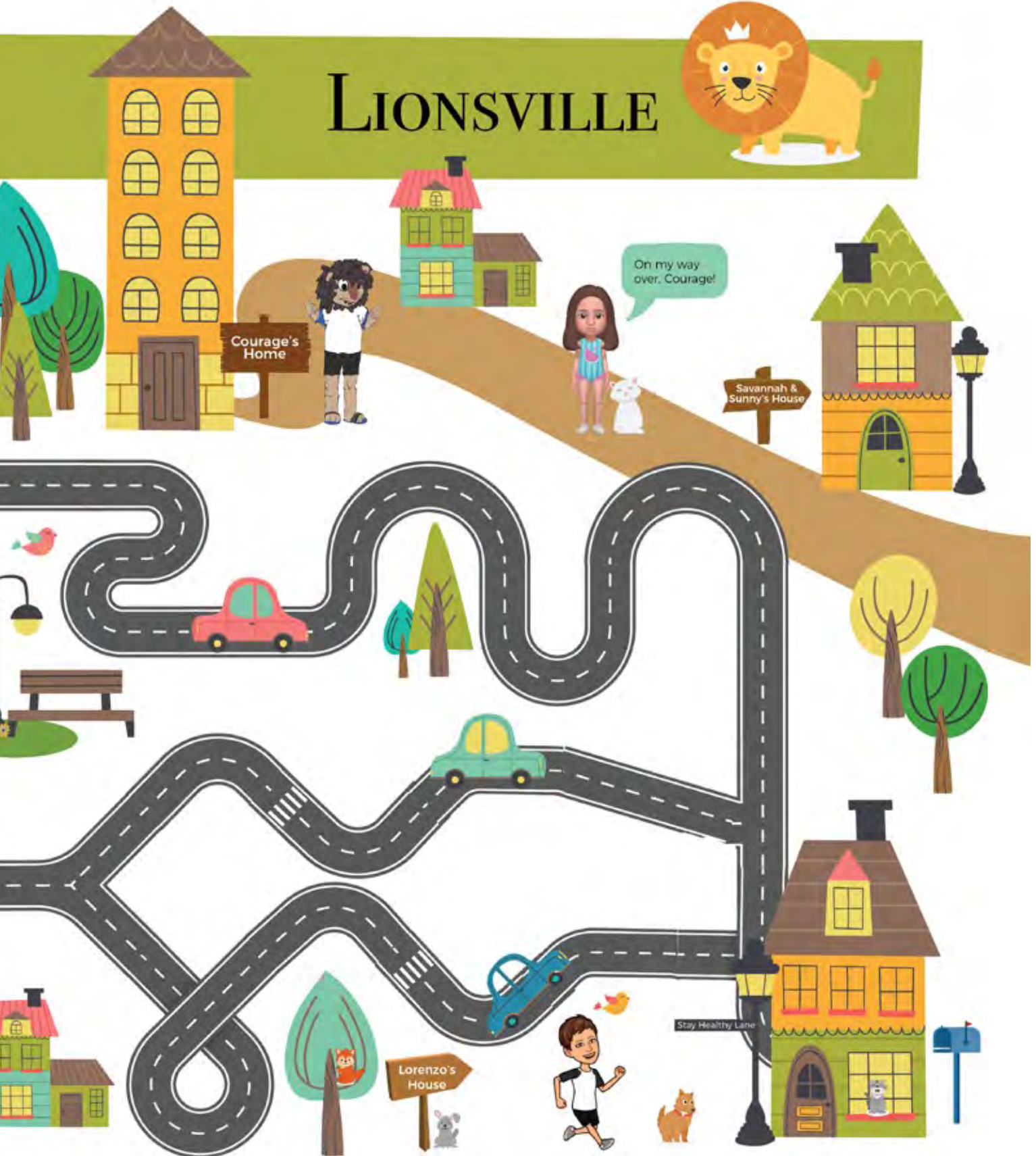
STOP



Breathe Easy Beach



LIONSVILLE





ABOUT PREVENTION

The Council on Chemical Abuse has a team of Prevention Specialists who provide a variety of educational programs to schools and community groups in Berks County. Programs can be tailored to any age group or setting. Prevention services range from single session education to multi-session evidence-based curriculum. All services are provided free of charge.

To request prevention services within Berks County, please call Alicia Kline, Prevention Program Supervisor at (610) 750-7550 or email akline@cocaberks.org.



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