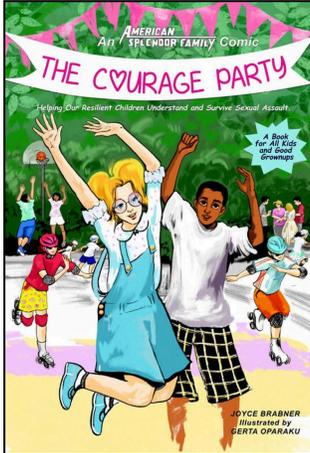




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Book Title: *The Courage Party: Helping Our Resilient Children Understand and Survive Sexual Assault*

Written by: Joyce Brabner with Danielle Batone

Art by: Gerta Oparaku Egry

Publisher: Microcosm Publishing

Year: 2020

ISBN #: 9781621067856

Age Range: 12+

Grade Range: Grade 7-9

Let's Get Ready to Read

About the Book

The Courage Party is a "gently explicit" book about sexual abuse, written for kids to read alone or (better) with a "good grownup." After escaping a playground predator, a young girl learns to understand what happened and how to carry herself with pride and conviction after five older women organize a "Courage Party" for her and share stories from their own lives. Interactions with police, pediatricians, prosecutors, victim advocates, a community rape crisis center, and courthouse are depicted as young Danielle learns she is more than a survivor. She is a "crime fighter," powered by her own truthfulness and courage, able to protect other kids in the park, with many good grownups on her side.

Based on a true story, Dani's own good grownup, Joyce, talks in the margins to parents about key ideas: ending conflicting messages ("You didn't do anything wrong. But don't tell anybody!"); understanding the difference between loving adult sexual intercourse and sexual abuse; interacting with authorities; and helping your child deal with malicious gossip, taunts, and jeers. (from Microcosm Publishing)

Why This Book Matters

"Microcosm has pushed for diversity in every aspect of our operation—from what we publish to how we publish—for 30 years. So we learned that we don't need to candy coat hard realities or shy away from topics that make some people uncomfortable. We push against



WE ARE STRONGER THAN CENSORSHIP

boundaries that don't serve their stated purpose or protect vulnerable people from harm. *The Courage Party* is personally meaningful to me because it's the sort of book that I needed as a young person and was written by a good adult about a topic that society would prefer to pretend isn't a problem. So naturally we face it head on." —Joe Biel, Founder and CEO of Microcosm Publishing

This book is “gently explicit” because it uses correct vocabulary and language to describe body parts and what happened to Danielle. Using correct, “gently explicit” language normalizes important conversations about sexual assault and reduces shame and stigma. The book also challenges the dominant narrative around sexual assault, calling it a criminal offense instead of a “situation” and reframing “victims” or “survivors” as “crime fighters”. It includes key language hints for grownups to use with young people and models how to listen and be responsive to a child who experiences sexual assault. It also outlines a process for children and their “good grownups” to follow after a sexual assault: calling the police, getting a physical exam from a doctor, meeting with a prosecutor, finding support from a Rape Crisis Center advocate, going to court with a judge, and creating a healing space by having a Courage Party.

One important aspect of the book is that Danielle’s voice, perspective, and experience are always centered. The adults around her help her understand what happened to her through clear, honest, developmentally appropriate language and reinforce that it was not her fault. They empower her to ask questions, give her language to tell her story when and to whom she wants, and take action to bring the assailant to justice. They also continually celebrate her courage throughout the various stages of the aftermath.

A note for adults: We recommend reading the book on your own before reading the book with youth. It’s important to preview the content to reflect on how you might navigate questions or reactions from your youth.

Read the introduction with your youth. This book speaks directly to both youth and adults. As explained in the introduction, the illustrations are for everybody, the words in black ink tell the story, and the words in pink ink in the bottom margin are connections, questions, and reflections for adults to ask the youth they are reading with.

There are important resources in the back of the book, including a note for grownups from Joyce about her perspective on Danielle’s sexual assault and why she handled it the way she



WE ARE STRONGER THAN CENSORSHIP

did, resources/help lines for kids, a glossary of words (bolded in the story), and guidelines for planning a Courage Party.

Read a review of the book from Veda Carmine-Ritchie, Microcosm Publishing Intern: [No Time to Be Ashamed: A review of Courage Party](#)

Key Terms/Concepts:

We recommend reviewing these key terms/concepts before you read the book with your youth.

- Good grownup - A good grownup is someone who listens to you when you are scared or upset and then helps you feel better. (page 22)
- Difference between being noisy when playing and being loud to get help in a dangerous situation (page 38)
- Rape, sexual assault, and oral sex (page 46)
- Crime fighter as opposed to victim or survivor (pages 47-48)
- Difference between sexual assault and sexual intercourse (pages 73-74)
- Rape, sexual assault, and power (pages 78-79)
- Consent and child protection laws (page 75)
- Prosecutor, defense lawyer/attorney, defendant (page 91); plea bargain (page 171)
- Dismissed with prejudice (page 102-103)
- Advocate - "An advocate is a trusted adult who will stick to your side through this whole business and try to make everything go as easily as possible for you and your family, until the end." (page 106)
- Rape Crisis Center (pages 110-111)
- Conflicting messages (pages 115-116)
- Internet predators (page 175)

A note for youth: "It's okay to read this book by yourself, but it's better if you talk about it or read it with a good grownup... (A good grownup is someone who listens to you when you are scared or upset and then helps you feel better.) Not all grownups are good listeners or good helpers. Sometimes you have to look around. You can always find one good grownup, but maybe not right away. If a parent is not a good listener, try a teacher... If a teacher is not a good listener, try a school counselor. Or a neighbor... Or someone at your church or temple. Or a friend's parent... Or your favorite relative." (*A Courage Party*, page 22)



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Reflection and Discussion Questions

Reflection Questions:

Before you read this book:

- What did you learn about bodily autonomy, consent, healthy relationships, and how to talk about sex and sexual harassment or violence when you were growing up? What messages did you receive about what was or wasn't okay to share or discuss? Who did you talk to about these topics when you had questions?
- What did you wish you had known or understood about these topics when you were younger?
- What questions or concerns do you have about talking to children about these topics? Where can you find answers to your questions or support for your concerns?

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Joyce respond when Danielle told her what happened with the boy at the park? *She helped Danielle calm down and regulate by drinking some ice water. She listened without interrupting. She made space for Danielle's questions. She ensured Danielle that she wasn't in trouble and it wasn't her fault several times. She used correct language in calling it a sexual assault.* (pages 44-46)
2. Why is calling Danielle a "crime fighter" more accurate than "victim" or "survivor"? Why is the specific language used to describe the sexual assault and Danielle as a crime fighter important? (pages 47-48)
3. Why does Joyce say, "You tell and tell and tell as much as you want. When something like this happens to a kid, they should always tell, no matter what the criminal says to them." (page 48)? Why might some kids have a hard time telling what happened to them?
4. How does Danielle tell the story of what happened to her? What kind of language did she use? (example on page 63)
5. What clue did Danielle give to the police officer that helped identify the assailant (person who sexually assaulted Danielle)? *She gave details about his shoes and underwear.* (pages 53 and 57)



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6. What is a Courage Party? Why was it important for Joyce to throw Danielle a Courage Party?
7. What were some of Danielle's emotions in the immediate aftermath of the sexual assault? How did Joyce comfort and support her?
8. In what ways does Joyce empower Danielle and help her feel brave and able to "take care of her own business"? *She lets Danielle tell her story in her own words and choose who to tell. She allows Danielle to design her Courage Party cake and what foods to have. She has Danielle call the prosecutor to make an appointment.*
9. How does Prosecutor Edward Kovach build trust with and connect to Danielle? *He shared how he lost his legs, why he became a lawyer, and his secret that many people do not know he doesn't have legs because he usually wears prosthetics. He tells her about his basketball team, the Demon Wheelers, and gives her a pin to remind her of her bravery as a crime fighter. (pages 96–99)*
10. The boy who assaulted Danielle had previously assaulted another girl who did not show up in court to share her story to the judge. This caused the previous sexual assault case against the boy to be "dismissed with prejudice." What might be some reasons why the girl didn't show up to court? Why might someone want to "just try to pretend nothing happened and forget about it."?
11. In what ways did Caitlin, the advocate from the Rape Crisis Center, support Danielle? *She showed her the courtroom, where people would be sitting, and how Danielle would speak to the judge. She invited Danielle to the kids club at the Rape Crisis Center. (pages 108–110) She helped Danielle and others come up with responses and language to say to others who try to diminish and shame them for what happened to them. (pages 116–117)*
12. What are some examples of conflicting messages that adults give to kids? How do those conflicting messages apply to sexual assault? Can you think of other conflicting messages you've heard?
13. Read the answers on page 117 that Danielle and her kids club friends came up with to respond to others who diminished or shamed them for what happened to them. How would you respond? What are other things you could say in a similar situation?



WE ARE STRONGER THAN CENSORSHIP

14. What were some things that happened at Danielle’s Courage Party that made her feel special? *Danielle got a special cake that she designed. Each woman brought Danielle a present (special laces for her sneakers, a magic wand, a book about sex, a superhero cape) and a card with everyone’s phone number on it. She got to share her story first. (pages 122–127)*
15. Courage Party stories:
- What were some similarities between the women’s stories?
 - Many of the women talk about listening to their instincts, their bodies, the danger signs when they feel something bad might happen to them. What does it feel like to you when you feel you’re not safe in a situation? What happens in your body?
 - What are some key lessons or takeaways from the women’s stories to remember?
 - Reverend Peggy: *Listen to your “early warning system”. It’s okay to say “no” and walk away.*
 - Mrs. Kent: *Keep telling your story and find a grownup who will listen. It’s okay to seek help and support because it’s not a shameful secret you have to keep from others.*
 - Dr. Anne: *Personal safety rules do not change no matter where you are. Do not go off with strangers.*
 - Joyce: *If you are in danger, do not be afraid to draw attention to yourself, even if what you are doing seems like it is against the law or would get you in trouble. Be 100% sure who people who offer help are and if they can be trusted. Thank the people who help you.*
 - Kaffers: *Sexual assault can and does happen to boys and men too. Sometimes, people get punished for speaking up against people in power who do bad things. It can take a lot of courage to take a stand against powerful people and institutions like churches, and the outcome is not always what you want. But it’s still important to protect vulnerable people like children from predators.*
16. What were some of Danielle’s emotions and worries before the court hearing and how did the good grownups in her life support her during this time?



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17. What role did Michael play in getting the boy and his mother to agree to a plea bargain? How did Michael's understanding of Danielle's sexual assault and his support for her change over time?

Inspire, Educate, and Connect

Learn More

- Learn more about the survivor support, public education, and public policy work that organizations like [RAINN](#) (Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network) do to prevent and respond to sexual violence. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE, [online.rainn.org](#) y [rainn.org/es](#)). Explore the [State Law Database](#) to learn about the legal definitions of terminology related to sexual violence and your state's laws regarding sexual violence.
- Check out [Darkness to Light](#), an organization that empowers adults to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse through awareness, education, and stigma reduction.

Talk About It

- Support - If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual violence and are in need of counseling, legal action, or emergency shelter, please contact one of the numbers listed on the [RISE](#) website.
- For parents and caregivers: Check out the [Parent Resources Page](#) at [amaze.org](#), an organization that provides sex education resources for educators and parents to support child and adolescent development into sexually healthy adults (different from [amazeworks.org](#)!). Scroll down to find videos that you can watch with your kids and discuss on a variety of sex ed topics, including healthy relationships and personal safety.

Take Action

- For educators: Check out the [Sexual Violence Toolkits](#) on double standards, consent, healthy relationships, and boundaries offered by [amaze.org](#), an organization that provides sex education resources for educators and parents to support child and adolescent development into sexually healthy adults (different from [amazeworks.org](#)!).
- Learn about [Bystander Intervention Tips and Strategies](#) from the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#), a leading nonprofit in providing information and tools to



WE ARE STRONGER THAN CENSORSHIP

prevent and respond to sexual violence. Check out their [Resource Topics](#) to learn more.

- Explore RAINN's [Student Activism webpage](#) to learn how youth can get involved in sexual assault prevention and response.

About This Book and Book Banning

About the *We Are Stronger Than Censorship* Project (IBPA) :

"[We Are Stronger Than Censorship](#) aims to combat the rising tide of book banning and censorship by empowering readers, supporting independent publishers, and ensuring that diverse voices are heard. The [Independent Book Publishers Association \(IBPA\)](#) and [EveryLibrary Institute](#) have teamed up to spread light and inclusive books to readers in communities across the US impacted by efforts to restrict the availability of books featuring Black, Queer, and other under-represented characters and themes."

Resources to Learn More About Book Bans and Censorship:

- [PEN America](#)
 - [Book Bans FAQ](#)
 - [Banned in the USA report:](#)
 - PEN America recorded 10,046 instances of book bans in the 2023-2024 school year.
 - Student access was removed to more than 4,000 unique book titles.
 - Authors whose books are targeted are most frequently female, people of color, and/or LGBTQ+ individuals.
- [Unite Against Book Bans](#)
- [Soft and Quiet: Self-Censorship In An Era of Book Challenges](#), Book Riot
- [National Coalition Against Censorship: Kids' Right to Read Project](#)
- [Books Unbanned](#)
 - [#TruthBeTold Campaign](#)

Taking Action Against Book Bans and Censorship:

- [BE STRONG! Things to do about Book Banning](#)
- [Unite Against Book Bans Action Toolkit](#)
- [PEN America: Tip Sheets for fighting book bans](#)
- [The Free Expression Educators Handbook](#)



WE ARE STRONGER THAN CENSORSHIP

About AmazeWorks

The mission of [AmazeWorks](#) is to champion equity and belonging for all. We believe that every child should see their families, identities, and lived experiences reflected in positive mirrors and windows into the lives of others who are different from them. AmazeWorks is happy to partner on the We Are Stronger Than Censorship program and offers this discussion guide because we all believe in the power of stories to inspire, educate, and connect us all.



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