

Nurturing responsible, future-ready global citizens

Ranger Buddies C.O.U.R.A.G.E. Framework White Paper



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Part I: Story behind the C.O.U.R.A.G.E. Framework

Empowering children to thrive in a rapidly changing future world

The world is constantly changing and presents new challenges every day. This has often been described by the word VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous). In the next 10 years the VUCA world may present even further challenges, and in the words of Andy Grove, we are at a strategic inflection point – where what we do (or don't do) can make a huge difference in children's readiness to face this future.

The **C.O.U.R.A.G.E. Framework** was thus developed to outline key qualities children will need to respond to this world. Events in the global environment, for example the pandemic, Ukraine crisis (amongst others) demand that our children move away from silos thinking into interconnected thinking. Being part of the world as a global citizen means that they can take on responsibilities - first, for themselves; next, for others; and hopefully for the world.

The 7 qualities in the framework outline what children will need to not only help them overcome obstacles, but also give them the confidence and determination to embrace change and seize new opportunities.

By teaching our children to be brave and to never give up, we are giving them the tools they need to succeed in this interconnected, hyper-VUCA world. We are helping them to develop the courage to take risks, the resilience to bounce back from setbacks, and the mindset to continuously learn and grow.

The C.O.U.R.A.G.E. Framework will guide the approach, design and implementation of everything we do here at Ranger Buddies. This ensures that as children go through our programs, partake in activities and interact with our content, that they will cultivate the 7 qualities required for them to thrive in this global world.

We look forward to having you as partners in this journey. While we empower their hearts and minds, we cannot do it alone. We will need the support of the family and schools. For them to take ownership in their future, it is our responsibility, in our lifetime, to provide our children with the support and guidance they need to thrive. When we see our children exhibit courage in the face of challenges, we encourage and support them so they continue to stay positive about the future to come.

Part II: Defining key terms in the Ranger Buddies vision

What does it mean to be a responsible, future-ready global citizen?

Responsible

Being responsible has two focus points (a) being responsible as a character trait and (b) being responsible to the world and earth we live in.

(a) As a character trait, being responsible means that you do the things you are expected to do (with understanding of the purpose) and accept the consequences (results) of your actions i.e how it impacts self & others. As such, you own up and face consequences if you were not able to do what was expected, and do what you are capable of doing. Characteristics such as self-control, self-efficacy, ownership, problem solving and adaptability are likely to be present.

(b) To be responsible to the world we live in, means that we think about and act in ways that contribute positively to the world e.g. taking public transport instead of driving; not supporting products that were animal tested.

Future-ready

Being future-ready means that you are prepared to face and respond to uncertainties and challenges in the future world; as such, you are able to thrive. This includes embodying characteristics like risk-taking, problem-solving and resilience, and also the ability to innovate and work with others to find solutions to real world problems.

Global citizen

A global citizen is someone who is aware of and understands the wider world - and their place in it. When thinking about issues, they consider perspectives from various angles - both socially and culturally. They seldom act in silos, instead taking an active role in their community, and working with others to make the world more equal, fair and sustainable.



Part III: The 7 qualities of the C.O.U.R.A.G.E. Framework

How do these qualities support the Ranger Buddies vision?

How the 7 qualities were identified

First, the terms in the vision (and associated characteristics) were defined. Next, research into the terms and the associated characteristics were compiled. For example, in the OECD's white paper on the goals of education heading into 2030 (OECD, 2018), some of the qualities outlined include curiosity, imagination, resilience and self-regulation; alongside these are equipping children with the knowledge, skills and competencies required to navigate the future world.

In Singapore, the Ministry of Education highlighted 21st century competencies such as active contributor, confident person, self-directed learner and concerned citizen as their four desired outcomes for students.

The characteristics were sorted to find similar clusters that could independently contribute to the vision. Then, the clusters were then named to become the key qualities. Finally, these qualities were put together into a unified framework and named **C.O.U.R.A.G.E.**

The qualities in the C.O.U.R.A.G.E framework thus collectively outline a set of qualities that will help children become responsible, future-ready global citizens.

Please see *Annex A* for more details of the process.

Overarching virtue of Courage

Courage is an important overarching virtue for the framework as courage helps children

persevere against challenges and in the process, feeling confident about themselves and their abilities. It is important for children to try new things even if they are scared (e.g. entering a new social situation), trying to master a new skill even when they are frustrated (e.g. growth mindset) and doing the right thing in difficult situations (e.g. admitting a mistake) (Tough, 2012). When the future is uncertain, or ever-changing, courage will help them navigate through it more positively.

Courage describes strengths that help you exercise your will and face adversity. It comprises emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal. (VIA Strengths)

Courage has three main features: a risk, an intention, and a goal that may benefit others. (Keyes & Lopez, 2001). For example, a student defends a friend who is being called names by a bully, by telling the bully to stop and protecting his friend. This act could potentially come with consequences for the student (e.g. being ostracized by the bully and friends, or getting hurt if the bully pushes him).

Courage doesn't have to look dramatic or fearless. Pury, Kowalski & Spearman (2007) distinguish between *general courage* (the confident or seemingly brazen actions perceived by others) and *personal courage* – actions that are courageous in the minds of the actors themselves. For children, this could be more simply described as the courage to keep going, to find a different way, and of course the courage to try in the first place.

Why these 7 Qualities?

Curious

According to the American Psychological Association, curiosity is defined as “the impulse or desire to investigate, observe, or gather information, particularly when the material is novel or interesting” (APA)

It is common to see young children as paragons for curiosity. After all, to be curious is to explore and discover and to take an active interest in something for its own sake. Curiosity can also be described as novelty-seeking and being open to experience, and it is associated with the natural desire to build knowledge. Whether it is to find the answers to a question, to try out something new, or to learn a new piece of information, curiosity is at the centre of that.

You will know someone is curious when you see them (a) exploring new ideas, activities and experiences; and (b) being motivated to increase their own knowledge (VIA)

Curiosity helps children remain engaged and facilitates their learning. As a result, they learn new knowledge. “Research has found that the brain’s chemistry changes when we become curious, helping them learn and retain information that may prove useful in the future.”

Optimistic

Optimism is a sense of hopefulness - the attitude that good things will happen in the future. Optimistic people believe that something good will happen even when things may not always go their way; for example, learning a lesson through a difficult experience. They are also confident that they will be able to attain the goals they aim for.

In research, optimism supports well-being and the ability to thrive amidst adversity. People who are optimistic are more likely to engage in active coping

methods, such as finding pathways to achieve their goals and solve their problems.

In his book *Learned Optimism*, Martin Seligman identified optimism as a habitual way of thinking, rather than solely a trait you are born with. This means that optimism can be learnt by exploring and practicing more optimistic ways of thinking (Seligman, 2006).

Optimism helps children learn from experience, try again and remain hopeful for the future. They are also more likely to feel in control and confident about what they are doing.

Undaunted

Being undaunted means the willingness to push through challenges without giving up. To face such challenges, children need to be brave and work through problems they face with focus, even when they fail or make mistakes.

People who are brave face challenges, threats and difficulties, instead of running from it. Bravery could be physical (e.g. rescuing someone from a fire), psychological (e.g. facing your fears) or moral (e.g. speaking up for what is right).

When faced with the challenge, they don’t give up easily and work towards overcoming the challenge with focus and purpose. Being undaunted is an important quality for a child. Plucking up the courage to try new things, to take the first step is not easy, but in doing so, they will become more confident about their own abilities, and experience success - which is a powerful reinforcing loop.



“Research has found that the brain’s chemistry changes when we become curious, helping them learn and retain information that may prove useful in the future.”

Resourceful

The Cambridge dictionary defines resourcefulness as being “skilled at solving problems and making decisions on your own” and “able to find and use different ways to help achieve your goals.”

In other words, being able to think creatively and critically so as to solve your problems. *Creativity* is the ability to find (and think of) new ways to do things - in ways that are useful. *Perspective-taking*, or the act of perceiving a situation or understanding something from the view of another person or perspective. Put together, this could support a person to find ways to overcome existing problems that others may not have thought of.

Creativity is not limited to art or music, it is also essential for cultivating social and emotional intelligence, and other subjects like math and science. Beyond problem solving, creativity also helps people be more adaptable and adjust to change more positively. Creative people have also been found to take advantage of new opportunities. Thus it is a core skill for children to cultivate in order to be happy and thrive ([Greater Good Berkeley](#)).

In the Institute of Mental Health’s Colours of the Mind survey, they found that one of the characteristics for mental well-being in children was **positive functioning** or the belief that they can solve problems. Children and youth with high positive functioning value themselves, are able to learn well, make good decisions, and adapt to different situations in school and at home.

Coupled with perspective taking, children will be able to see things from another person’s view, with greater empathy and understanding. This will facilitate their ability to communicate, get along with others and possibly collaborate on solving problems together.

Adaptable

Being adaptable or agile is absolutely necessary in an uncertain environment. Adaptability is defined as “the ability to make adjustments in cognition, behaviour and/or affect in response to uncertain and novel circumstances, conditions, and situations” (Martin, Nejad, Colmar & Liem, 2013).

Someone who is adaptable is open to change, and possibly even embraces change. When it comes to solving problems, they are willing to try new ways instead of staying rigid. They also feel comfortable with uncertainty.

This ties in strongly with the body of research behind [growth mindset](#) (Dweck, 2006), or the idea that the brain is malleable and we can adapt and grow to new situations. Furthermore, people with a growth mindset enjoy challenges, strive to learn and consistently see potential to develop new skills - this keeps them adaptable in the face of change.

Children who are adaptable can adjust to the rapidly changing environment more quickly, and thus experience greater success both in academic and non-academic domains. In the field of positive psychology, children who are adaptable are also more positive, resourceful and resilient.

Gritty

Grit is the ability to sustain interest (passion) in and effort (perseverance) toward very long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). In Duckworth's words, "Grit is about having what some researchers call an "ultimate concern"—a goal you care about so much that it organises and gives meaning to almost everything you do."

In her research, Duckworth found that grit predicts achievement in really challenging and personally meaningful contexts. Furthermore, other studies also show that people could be talented, smart and curious but that does not mean they will necessarily be successful if they don't learn to pursue their interests with perseverance. This is further cemented by Tough's (2012) findings that developing skills like "grit, optimism, self-control and perseverance" are more important than IQ.

Perseverance is about finishing what you start, despite obstacles that come your way. This means that one must be able to overcome negative thoughts and focus on the bigger picture to get to the finish line. In other words, perseverance requires both effort on a task, while being able to do so for a long period of time.

Equipping children with the capacity to be gritty means cultivating environments where children have the opportunity to work on something that they are passionate about, over a longer period of time. That way, when they encounter challenges, they are more willing to persevere and achieve their goals.

Empathetic

Empathy, according to Professor Brene Brown, has 4 components: (a) perspective taking or the willingness to see and feel the world through the eyes of another; (b) staying out of judgment and being open to what they're feeling; (c) recognising emotions within yourself that might be similar to the other person; and (d) communicating that you understand how they might be feeling and validating their emotions.

Empathy is an important ingredient for positive mental health. When children learn the skills of empathy, they are better able to relate to others and share their emotions, which is critical to positive mental health. They also are less likely to participate in risky behaviour like bullying or self-harming, as they have a healthy way to recognise and manage their emotions.

It is also a necessary ingredient for cultivating healthy relationships with family and friends. Cultivating empathy in children means teaching them how to feel with others, care about others well-being and take action to help (if needed). As they feel a deeper connection to others, they can draw on empathy to feel connected to the world beyond themselves. Indeed, research has found that children who are more empathetic are more likely to help someone in need, volunteer and come up with ideas to solve societal issues that benefit more people.

“When children learn the skills of empathy, they are better able to relate to others and share their emotions, which is critical to positive mental health. They also are less likely to participate in risky behaviour like bullying or self-harming, as they have a healthy way to recognise and manage their emotions.”



Part IV: References

Overarching virtue of Courage

[How Children Succeed](#)

[Handbook of Positive Psychology](#)

[Distinctions between general and personal courage](#)

Curious

[APA- Defining curiosity](#)

[Curiosity | Character Strength | VIA Institute](#)

[Children's Need to Know: Curiosity in Schools | Harvard Educational Review](#)

Optimistic

[APA- Defining "optimistic"](#)

[Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life](#)

Undaunted

[Bravery | Character Strength | VIA Institute](#)

[Perseverance | Character Strength | VIA Institute](#)

Resourceful

[Creativity | Character Strength | VIA Institute](#)

[Perspective | Character Strength | VIA Institute](#)

[7 Ways to Foster Creativity in Your Kids](#)

[IMH Mental Wellbeing Guide](#)

Adaptability

[Mindset: The New Psychology of Success: Dweck, Carol S.](#)

[What Having a "Growth Mindset" Actually Means](#)

[Journal of Educational Psychology: Adaptability](#)

[Martin Seligman's PERMA model](#)

Gritty

[Grit - Character Lab](#)

[Angela Duckworth/ Grit Book](#)

[How Children Succeed by Paul Tough](#)

Empathetic

[Atlas of the Heart - Brené Brown](#)

[The Wisdom of Babies | Greater Good](#)

Part V: Annex

Annex A: Process to identify the 7 qualities

Step 1: Break down the terms in the vision	Step 2: Definition and identify associated characteristics	Step 3: Putting characteristics together	Step 4: Identifying and naming of clusters (into qualities)
<p>Responsible</p>	<p>Being responsible means you do the things you are expected to do and accept the consequences (results) of your actions i.e how it impacts self & others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being responsible (doing what you are expected do) • taking responsibility (own up and face consequences if didn't do what was expected) • acting responsibly (think about self & others) • having responsibilities (do what you are capable of doing, according to age group) 	<p>Being responsible Taking responsibility Acting responsibly Having responsibilities Courage Optimism Resilience Empathy Critical Thinking Problem Solving Creativity Communication Collaboration Curiosity Initiative Adaptability Grit Perseverance Leadership</p>	<p>Curiosity Curiosity Innovative</p> <p>Optimism Optimism Takes calculated risks</p> <p>Undaunted Leadership Confident Excellence Driven</p> <p>Resourceful Initiative Creativity Problem Solving Self-directed Imagination</p>
<p>Future-ready</p>	<p>21st Century competencies (MOE):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving 2. Creativity 3. Communication 4. Collaboration <p>Character Qualities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Curiosity 6. Initiative 7. Adaptability 8. Grit/Perseverance 9. Leadership 10. Social and Cultural Awareness 	<p>Cultural Awareness Confident Adaptable Self-directed Perseverance Takes calculated risks Active Contributor Innovative Excellence driven Concerned citizen Aware of the world Bettering others lives Aware of the world Active role Self-awareness Contributor Self-regulation</p>	<p>Adaptable Adaptability Critical Thinking Self-regulation</p> <p>Gritty Perseverance Grit Being responsible and acting responsibly</p> <p>Empathetic Cultural Awareness Active Contributor Bettering others lives</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confident person who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgment, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively. ● Self-directed learner who questions, reflects, perseveres and takes responsibility for his own learning. ● Active contributor who is able to work effectively in teams, is innovative, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks and strives for excellence. ● Concerned citizen who is rooted to Singapore, has a strong sense of civic responsibility, is informed about Singapore and the world, and takes an active part in bettering the lives of others around him. <p>OECD: Curiosity, imagination, resilience and self-regulation</p>	Imagination	Aware of the world Empathy Communication
Global citizen	Oxfam: A global citizen is someone who is aware of and understands the wider world - and their place in it. They take an active role in their community, and work with others to make our planet more equal, fair and sustainable.		