

Authorizing Refresher



Authorizing -- Referring to an "expert" to support the claim

Why Do We Teach Girls That It's Cute to Be Scared?

A version of this op-ed appeared on February 21, 2016 in the *New York Times*.

by Caroline Paul

Caroline Paul is an American writer and the author of the forthcoming book *The Gutsy Girl: Escapades for Your Life of Epic Adventure*. She was educated in journalism and documentary film at Stanford University. She worked as a journalist at Berkeley public radio station KPFA before joining the San Francisco Fire Department, as one of the first women hired by the department. She worked most of her career on Rescue 2, where she and her crew were responsible for search and rescue in fires. Rescue 2 members were also trained and sent on scuba dive searches, rope and rappelling rescues, surf rescues, confined space rescues, all hazardous material calls, and the most severe train and car wrecks.

I was one of the first women in the San Francisco Fire Department. For more than a dozen years, I worked on a busy rig in a tough neighborhood where rundown houses caught fire easily and gangs fought with machetes and .22s. I've pulled a bloated body from the bay, performed CPR on a baby and crawled down countless smoky hallways.

I expected people to question whether I had the physical ability to do the job (even though I was a 5-foot-10, 150-pound ex-college athlete). What I didn't expect was the question I heard more than any other: "Aren't you scared?"

It was strange — and insulting — to have my courage doubted. I never heard my male colleagues asked this. Apparently, fear is expected of women.

This fear conditioning begins early. Research studies in the scholarly and peer reviewed *The Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* have shown that physical activity—sports, hiking, playing outdoors—is tied to girls' self-esteem. And yet girls are often warned away from doing anything that involves a hint of risk.

One study by Barbara Morrongiello, research professor of behavioral science and clinical psychology Guelph University in Ontario Canada, focused on, coincidentally, a playground fire pole, is particularly revealing. Morrongiello's article was published in *The Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* and showed that parents cautioned their daughters about the dangers of the fire pole significantly more than they did their sons and were much more likely to assist them. But both moms and dads directed their sons to face their fears, with instruction on how to complete the task on their own.

I spoke recently to a friend who admitted that she cautioned her daughter much more than her son. "But she's very klutzy," the mom explained. I wondered, wasn't there a way even a klutzy child could

take risks? My friend agreed there might be, but only halfheartedly, and I could see on her face that maternal instinct was sparring with feminism, and feminism was losing.

I had been a klutzy child, too. I was also shy, and scared of many things: big kids, whatever might be under my bed at night, school. But I pored over National Geographic and “Harriet the Spy.” I knew all about Sir Lancelot and the Knights of the Round Table, who wandered the countryside swearing oaths of bravery and honor. None of these characters talked about fear. They talked about courage, exploration and exciting deeds.

So I biked down a steep country road (and hit a car). I sledded down an icy hill (and hit a tree). I don’t remember my parents freaking out; they seemed to understand that mishaps were part of childhood. I got a few stitches, and kept biking and sledding. Misadventures meant that I should try again. With each triumph over fear and physical adversity, I gained confidence.

I recently asked my mother why she never tried to stop me. She said that her own mother had been very fearful, gasping at anything remotely rough-and-tumble. “I had been so discouraged from having adventures, and I wanted you to have a more exciting childhood,” she told me.

My mom is an outlier. According to a study by three University of Iowa professors and published in *The Journal of Pediatric Psychology* in 2015, parents are “four times more likely to tell girls than boys to be more careful” after mishaps that are not life-threatening but do entail a trip to the emergency room. It seems like a reasonable warning. But there is a drawback, and University of Iowa researcher Elizabeth O’Neal of the University of Iowa Department of Psychology remarked on it with her co-researchers: “Girls may be less likely than boys to try challenging physical activities, which are important for developing new skills.” O’Neal and her co-researcher’s study points to an uncomfortable truth: We think our daughters are more fragile, both physically and emotionally, than our sons.

Nobody is saying that injuries are good, or that girls should be reckless. But risk taking is important. Gever Tulley, the author of *50 Dangerous Things (You Should Let Your Children Do)* and American writer, speaker, computer scientist, and founder of the Brightworks School and Tinkering School, encourages girls and boys to own pocket knives, light fires and throw spears, arguing that “dangerous activities under supervision can teach kids responsibility, problem-solving and confidence.” It follows that by cautioning girls away from these experiences, we are not protecting them. We are failing to prepare them for life.

When a girl learns that the chance of skinning her knee is an acceptable reason not to attempt the fire pole, she learns to avoid activities outside her comfort zone. Soon many situations are considered too scary, when in fact they are simply exhilarating and unknown. Fear becomes a go-to feminine trait, something girls are expected to feel and express at will. By the time a girl reaches her tweens no one bats an eye when she screams at the sight of an insect.

When girls become women, this fear manifests as deference and timid decision making. We try to counter this conditioning by urging ourselves and the women in our lives to be aggressive and

hard-charging. Women must “lean in” and “violate unwritten rules about acceptable social conduct. Men are continually applauded for being ambitious and powerful and successful, but women who display these same traits often pay a social penalty.” Women’s accomplishments come at a cost and thus women must be prepared to feel fear and act nonetheless, says Sheryl Sandberg, American technology executive, activist, and author in her book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. Books on female empowerment may proliferate on our shelves. I admire what these writers are trying to do—but they come far too late.

We must chuck the insidious language of fear (Be careful! That’s too scary!) and instead use the same terms we offer boys, of bravery and resilience. We need to embolden girls to master skills that at first appear difficult, even dangerous. And it’s *not* cute when a 10-year-old girl screeches, “I’m too scared.”

When I worked as a firefighter, I was often scared. Of course I was. So were the men. But fear wasn’t a reason to quit. I put my fear where it belonged, behind my feelings of focus, confidence and courage. Then I headed, with my crew, into the burning building.

9 AUTHORIZING Sentence Starters

- a. Read the article above.
 - b. Use it to complete the sentences below.
1. In her [insert title of book/article], author [insert name] states, “_____.”
 2. [Name], an expert on [topic], says, “_____.”
 3. [Name], who is known for her work on [topic], argues, “_____.”
 4. In a recent published article, [Name], author of [article], makes the point that “_____.”
 5. [Name] discusses this point in her book [title], where she says, “_____.”
 6. [Name], expert in the field of _____, goes on to suggest that “_____.”
 7. Another expert on [topic], [Name], makes a further point: “_____.”
 8. [Name], who herself has experienced _____ [related to topic], says, “_____.”
 9. In his research on [title], [topic] expert [Name] explores this idea. He says, “_____.”

Defining Illustrating, Extending, and Countering



Illustrating -- Using specific examples from the text to support the claim



Extending -- Putting your own “spin” on terms & ideas you take from other texts



Countering -- “Pushing back” against the text in some way (e.g., disagree with it, challenge something it says, or interpret it differently)

List of Text Quotes

1. “The important thing is to never stop questioning.” –*famous scientist Albert Einstein*
2. “Racism is a way to gain economic advantage at the expense of others. Slavery and plantations may be gone, but racism still allows us to regard those who may keep us from financial gain as less than equals.” –*Civil rights leader and minister Alveda King*
3. “Don’t become a mere recorder of facts, but try to penetrate the mystery of their origin.” –*Nobel-prize winning physiologist Ivan Pavlov*
4. “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.” –*civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.*
5. “The good life is a direction, not a destination.” –*influential American psychologist Carl Rogers*
6. “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.” –*American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who create a Hierarchy of Needs*
7. “Racism springs from ignorance.” –*famous black Italian soccer player Mario Baloteli*
8. “Forgiving those who hurt us is the key to personal peace.” –*Ulysses G. Weatherly, found of the American Sociological Society*
9. “Happiness is not a station to arrive at, but a manner of traveling.” –*early 20th century author Margaret Lee Runbeck*

10. "There is no doubt that the supporters of the death penalty have more in common with murderers than its opponents." –*Remy de Gourmont, French poet, novelist and critic*

11. "One should always be happy. That's why one should never marry." –*19th century British author Oscar Wilde*

12. "There was never a good war, or a bad peace." –*Inventor, politician, scientist, and Founding Father Benjamin Franklin*

13. "There is no such thing as inner peace. There is only nervousness and death." –*American author and public speaker Fran Lebowitz*

14. "Americans should fear Mexicans more than ISIS." –*American social and political commentator Ann Coulter*

Harris Moves Activity

Part 1: Illustrating

- a. Pick any quote from the list.
- b. Write:

According to *[insert person quoted and their information]*, *"[insert quote]."* **In other words, what they're saying is** *[insert one or more sentences explaining what the quote means].*

Part 2: Extending

- a. Pick a quote from the list that you AGREE with.
- b. Write:

According to *[insert person quoted and their information]*, *"[insert quote]."* **I agree, and I would go even further to say** *[insert one or more sentences that goes past the text into the world of your own ideas].*

Part 3: Countering

- a. Pick a quote from the list that you DISAGREE with.
- b. Write:

According to *[insert person quoted and their information]*, *"[insert quote]."* **But I disagree. I think that** *[insert one or more sentences that explains why you disagree]*