

# What is humility: a brief definition

Complete these words to ascertain a helpful definition of humility

## Humble people...



- acknowledge, explore, and embrace their limitations and shortcomings,
- appreciate other people and perspectives,
- integrate these insights with their existing beliefs, values, and tendencies

...because they are motivated to learn from other people and experiences.

Before we explore these three features of humility in more detail, we will demonstrate some of the benefits of humility

## What do you feel are the benefits of humility?



Complete one or more of the following exercises:



- Recall an occasion in which you acted with humility—such as a time you decided not to demonstrate your knowledge or refer to a recent achievement. How did you feel about yourself afterwards?
- Identify one or more people who you admire who you also perceive as humble. What do you like about these people?
- Identify some arrogant people you do not like. Why do you dislike these people.

From these exercises, list some of the benefits of humility from your perspective



**Established benefits of humility**

The following table outlines the benefits of humility that researchers have uncovered.

- Which one to three discoveries surprised you the most?
- Which one to three discoveries do you feel may be interesting to other people?
- Imagine a conversation in which you convey one of these discoveries to someone else (Mendonça et al., 2023).

**Performance**

Generally, people who tend to be humble—and, for example, acknowledge their limitations, question their assumptions, consider diverse perspectives, and do not perceive themselves or their community as inherently superior—perform better on many tasks. For example, these individuals

- receive higher grades at university (Wong & Wong, 2021), partly because they are more receptive to feedback,
- differentiate strong arguments from tenuous arguments better (Leary et al., 2017)—and are not as inclined to ascribe problems in society to secret deals or other conspiracies (Bertin, 2024)
- develop more extensive general knowledge (Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2020),
- are more prudent, diminishing the likelihood of bankruptcy (Dixon et al., 2025).

## Resilience and wellbeing

Typically, people who exhibit the hallmarks of humility—such as acknowledge their limitations, embrace other perspectives, and strive to develop rather than seem defensive or feel special—tend to experience greater wellbeing. For example, these individuals

- experience a greater sense of autonomy, mastery, growth, positive relationships, sense of purpose, and self-acceptance (Ross & Wright, 2023; see also Wright et al., 2018),
- enjoy greater satisfaction with life and more pleasant emotions (e.g., Scharbert et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2025),
- cope better and exhibit resilience in response to initial failures (Porter et al., 2020), unfavourable feedback (Wong & Wong, 2021), personal conflicts (Peetz & Grossmann, 2021), or other adversities (e.g., Zhang et al., 2025).

## Relationships

Typically, people who exhibit humility—such as acknowledge their limitations, embrace other perspectives, and strive to develop rather than seem very defensive, competitive, or conceited—are more likely to establish and to maintain trusting and supportive relationships (Peters et al., 2011). For example, these individuals

- are more generous, charitable, empathic, grateful, and willing to assist other individuals (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017; Zhang et al., 2025)—even after controlling personality (Exline & Hill, 2012),
- establish more satisfying romantic relationships—relationships in which their partner feels satisfied too (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2024).



## Integrity

Individuals who are narcissistic are more likely to engage in academic misconduct, such as cheat or plagiarise. This relationship can partly be explained by a sense of entitlement (Curtis et al., 2022).

## Leadership

When leaders are humble rather than narcissistic or conceited, they tend to enhance the performance of their teams or organisation and are more likely to be perceived as effective (Lynch & Benson, 2024). For example

- the organisations they lead perform better on the share market than expected (Petrenko et al., 2019),
- the teams they lead tend to collaborate more effectively (Ou et al., 2018; Owens & Hekman, 2016) as well as support customers more proactively and effectively (Peng et al., 2023),
- these teams also adapt effectively and proactively to accommodate recent changes and innovations in the sector (Chaudhary et al., 2025),
- the individuals they lead feel more supported and satisfied with their jobs (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rowatt, 2023).

### Did you know



Individuals tend to prefer political leaders who exhibit humility, especially in circumstances in which cooperation and discussion with opposing communities are vital (Koetke & Schumann, 2025).

## Did you know



To earn a higher salary, many staff highlight their experience, their education, and the long hours they work, praise colleagues to seem likeable, or even attempt to intimidate co-workers occasionally. Interestingly, staff who utilise these strategies, called impression management, tend to earn a lower salary and receive fewer promotions (Debus et al., 2024).

## Exceptions and caveats

Admittedly, the benefits of humility, and the drawbacks of narcissism, entitlement, and conceit, may not be as pronounced in all circumstances. Below are some of these caveats. To what extent do these caveats may apply to your circumstances?



In Western nations, narcissistic people tend to refrain from acts that are intended to benefit the community, such as donations to social causes. But, in some Eastern nations, in which individuals may be more inclined to define themselves by their community and relationships, narcissistic people may be more inclined to initiate these acts to pursue status in their community (An et al., 2024).

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In some workplaces, most people, including leaders, embrace the importance of freedom and autonomy. These people recognise that individuals should be granted the right to express themselves and even to deviate from social norms occasionally.

In other workplaces, people are more concerned about law and order. They believe that individuals who deviate from social norms should, in general, be swiftly punished.

In workplaces that prioritise law and order, staff tend to prefer leaders who are authoritarian, dominant, and even masculine—leaders who control and restrict their staff (Chen et al., 2024). Consequently, individuals in these workplaces may, at least initially, be concerned that humble leaders will not control and restrict other people sufficiently.

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Some facets of narcissism may be helpful in specific settings. For example, in US states in which narcissism is higher, obesity is not as prevalent, perhaps because narcissistic individuals are often especially concerned about their appearance (Gruda et al., 2024).

## The drawbacks of humility

In the following space, list what you feel might be the drawbacks of humility. For example, you might assume that people who are humble do not feel assured and confident.

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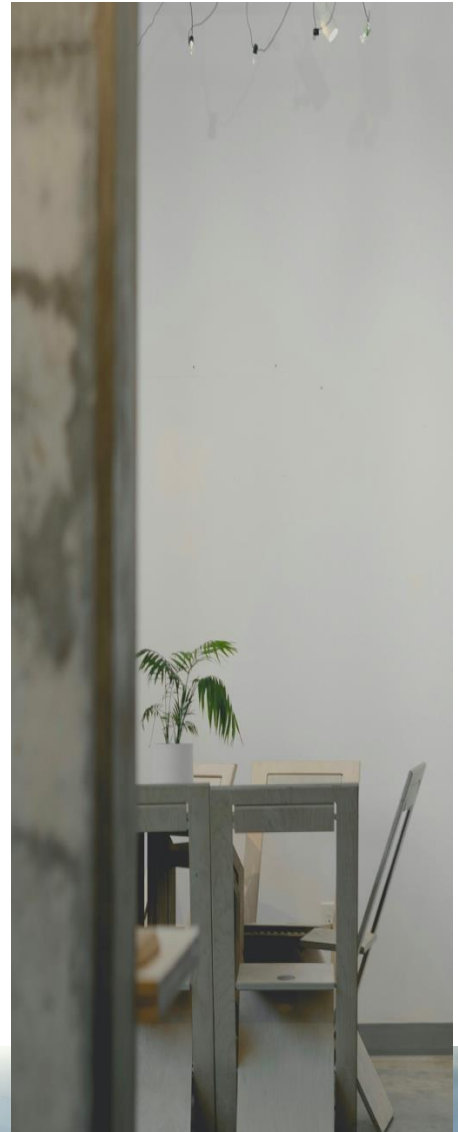
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Research has refuted some of the perceived drawbacks of humility--such as the perception that humble people are not assured and confident.

- People who are humble, rather than narcissistic, are often more assured and confident because they are not as defensive. Their perception of themselves is thus more stable and resilient.
- Likewise, humble people are more inclined to seek, to respect, and to embrace feedback about their behaviour. This feedback helps individuals clarify both their strengths and limitations. So, humble people are often more attuned to their strengths and talents than other people.





In the following table, the left column outlines some perceived drawbacks of humility. The right column outlines the evidence that challenges these perceptions. Scan this table to determine whether this information tempers some of the apparent drawbacks of humility.

Perceived drawback	Reality
People who are narcissistic, arrogant, or entitled—rather than humble—often display unmitigated confidence and may thus impress customers and investors	<p>People who are humble can also display unmitigated confidence and demonstrate leadership at times. As leaders, these individuals tend to promote innovation in their teams. Yet, unlike their narcissistic counterparts, humble people can activate or disable these inclinations—and can thus adjust more appropriately to the circumstances (Zhang et al., 2017).</p> <p>If you feel the need to display humility and confidence simultaneously, you could display body language that manifests this confidence. For example, you could adopt a more dominant posture, with your elbows away from your chest, your legs apart, while you lean back slightly. In response, the other person may feel and behave more submissively (Tiedens &amp; Fragale, 2003).</p>
People who are humble may not seem to be credible.	People who are humble often willing to ask questions and to seek advice. Interestingly, after people seek advice, especially about complicated matters, their credibility improves rather than deteriorates (Brooks et al., 2015).

Perceived drawback	Reality
People who are narcissistic, arrogant, or entitled—rather than humble—tend to be more confident and competent in negotiations	When negotiating, people who are narcissistic, arrogant, or entitled tend to belittle the product or service the other person is offering, expressing statements like “That product is not worthy of this price”. In contrast, people who are humble may indicate they cannot afford the product or service, expressing statements like “I cannot afford this amount at this stage”. The strategy that narcissistic, arrogant, or entitled adopt, however, tends to be less effective. The other person is more likely to experience unpleasant emotions, diminishing the likelihood of compromise (Bhattachary & Dugar, 2023).
People who are humble may not seem to be credible.	People who are humble often willing to ask questions and to seek advice. Interestingly, after people seek advice, especially about complicated matters, their credibility improves rather than deteriorates (Brooks et al., 2015).

Even if you strive to foster humility, you are welcome to pursue inspiring aspirations, but you should question your expectations. For example, you might pursue the aspiration to be a leader of a division. But, to manage your expectations, identify two or three reasons this goal may not be as feasible as you first assumed.

**Did you know**



People who fail to fulfill their aspirations are no more likely than people who do fulfill their aspirations to experience mental health concerns. Yet, people who fail to fulfill achievements they strongly expect are likely to experience mental health concerns (Sendroiu et al., 2021).



# A brief intervention now

Thus far, we have discussed the benefits of humility—compared to narcissism, entitlement, and arrogance. But you might not feel entirely committed to this pursuit of humility until you forge some progress on this pursuit



To achieve this goal:

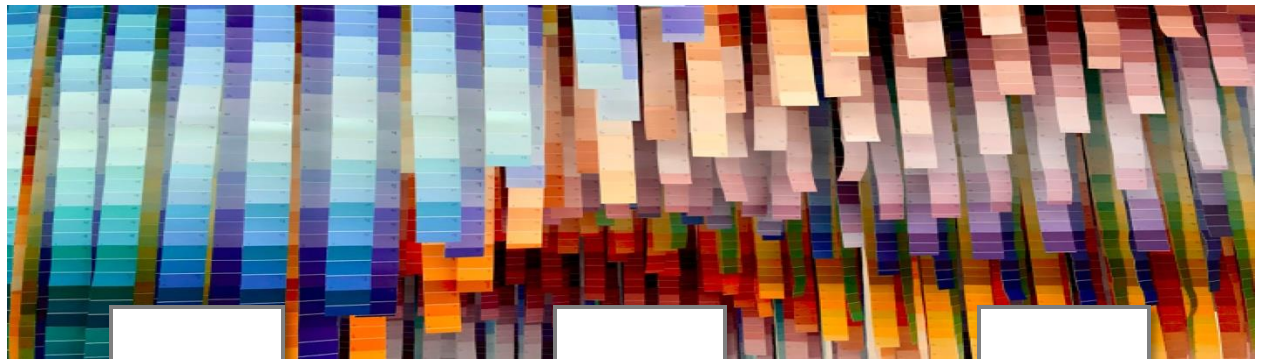


- first skim the left column in the following table, representing common strengths,
- identify between two and four strengths that you feel you have developed or demonstrated,
- for each of these strengths, consider the corresponding drawbacks or complications that appear in the right column.

Strength	Corresponding drawback or limitation
<b>Persuasive</b> in debates and negotiations	You may not always listen effectively or shift your opinions in response to useful information.
<b>Leads</b> people effectively	You feel uneasy when you cannot shape decisions
<b>Courageously</b> expresses opinions that people may not like	You may offend or hurt people unnecessarily—or may overlook the merits of alternative arguments.
<b>Confident and sociable</b> in social settings	You may not listen effectively to people who are more reserved, annoy people who feel their voice is stifled, or not reflect on your own behaviour.
<b>Collaborates</b> effectively with other people	You may not always feel confident reaching decisions alone.
<b>Sympathetic and caring</b> of other people	You may not be able to express feedback that could initially upset, but ultimately help, other people.

Strength continued	Corresponding drawback or limitation
<b>Rational;</b> can use evidence and numbers to reach decisions	You may reach decisions that overlook the broader perspective
<b>Intuitive</b> and able to trust hunches to reach decisions	You may not be able to justify your decisions effectively. Your decisions may be biased by your own preferences.
<b>Careful</b> and able to identify and to prevent risks	You may overlook beneficial but uncertain opportunities
<b>Open</b> to novel ideas and changes	You may perceive your work as tedious and unstimulating
<b>Intelligent</b> and able to understand complicated or intangible ideas	You may not always be practical enough to achieve goals efficiently
<b>Creative</b> and able to suggest novel, helpful, and diverse ideas.	You may disregard useful but conventional practices prematurely or struggle with routines
<b>Adaptable</b> and flexible enough to accommodate diverse circumstances or people	You may sometimes feel inauthentic or uncertain about what you really believe
<b>Disciplined;</b> sacrifices pleasure now to pursue future goals	You may not appreciate your environment or situation enough.
<b>Persistent</b> and conscientious	You may persist on tasks too long rather than change your course of direction when necessary.
<b>Resilient</b> in response to criticism and optimistic about the future	You may dismiss feedback and not adapt your practices when necessary.. Or your expectations may often be unfulfilled, eliciting disappointment in you or the people who trusted you.
<b>Relaxed and composed</b> , seldom showing unpleasant emotions	You may not plan effectively to avoid problems. Or you may perceive your relationships as superficial rather than genuine.
<b>Ambitious;</b> strives to fulfill steep goals	You may not maintain and nurture your friendships and relationships—and may feel detached from other people and exhausted.
<b>Decisive;</b> reaches decisions swiftly	You may be impulsive and regret some choices. Your decisions may be misinformed at times.

From this information, identify some of your potential limitations. Imagine acknowledging this limitation to another person. For example...



1	2	3
You might imagine speaking to a colleague	You might imagine yourself saying “You look so comfortable in this photo. I am not so comfortable in formal settings	Form the intention to acknowledge one of these limitations in the next week or so.

When you acknowledge your limitations or shortcomings, confine these faults to specific circumstances. To illustrate, you might indicate you are unconfident in formal settings rather than say you are socially inept generally. You may even decide to exaggerate your faults humorously, such as “I’m so bad with numbers, while attempting to sleep, I need a calculator to count sheep”.

# Many brief interventions later



The following table lists some other actions that could boost your humility, at least to some extent, quite rapidly. You could perhaps



- skim the following table,
- identify at least two activities that you might attempt in the future,
- for a few minutes, imagine the precise circumstances in which you might attempt these activities; then, as vividly as possible, imagine yourself undertaking each activity;
- finally, silently repeat to yourself several times your commitment to undertake these activities in specific circumstances, such as “on the first day of each month, I will deliberately engage in an activity that elicits stress”.

This activity, called an implementation intention, has been shown to significantly increase the likelihood you will fulfill one of your plans.

Activity	Illustration or justification
Search and watch videos in which credible individuals present arguments that contradict your opinions. Attempt to integrate some of their arguments with your opinions.	<p>When people attempt to consider and integrate contradictory perspectives, their capacity to solve problems creatively also improves (Bianchi et al., 2020)</p> <p>These experiences can enhance resilience, promote growth, as well as foster empathy.</p>
Occasionally, express genuine compliments to people—especially people who differ appreciably from you	<p>After individuals praise other people, they often feel more resilient (see also Grant et al., 2020).</p> <p>When people deliberately and confidently approach individuals who differ from themselves, they tend to embrace diverse perspective better.</p>

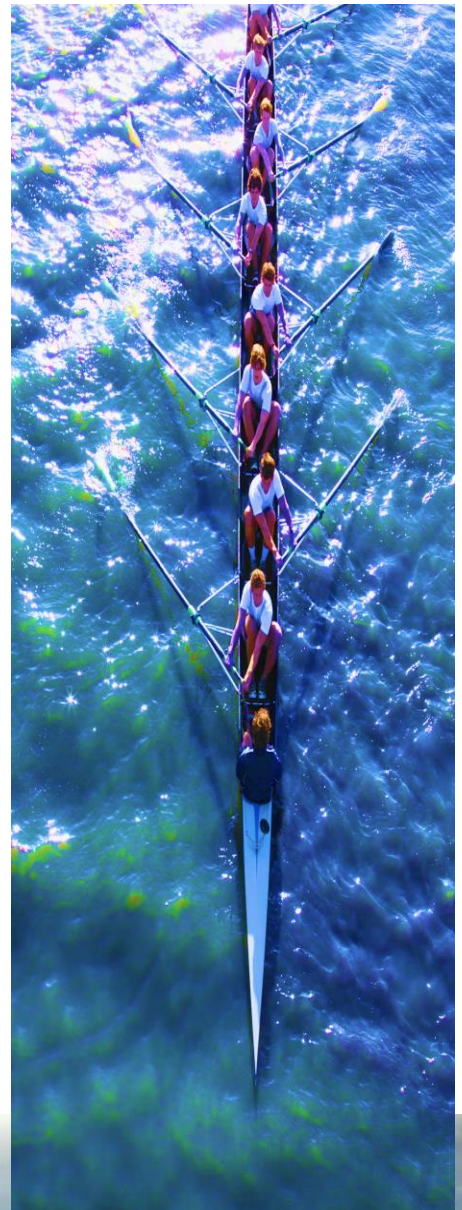
Activity continued	Illustration or justification
Over time, gradually increase the number of people—such as colleagues, mentors, friends, or relatives—from whom you occasionally seek advice.	<p>That is, gradually develop a list of people from whom you can seek advice. Then, formulate a plan on how often you will seek this advice.</p> <p>Ask questions about topics in which your knowledge is limited.</p> <p>When people honestly acknowledge what they do not know about a topic, they may subsequently learn more effectively (Mendonça et al., 2023).</p>
If you disagree with someone during a meeting or conversation and feel emotional about this matter, ask a question to seek more information rather than attempt to counter their argument.	<p>Similarly, when you disagree with an argument, identify opportunities to express your opinion at least two days afterwards rather than during the discussion.</p> <p>Interestingly, people who speak infrequently, but thoughtfully, during meetings often seem more credible as well (Brykman &amp; Raver, 2021).</p>
Whenever you express a suggestion, highlight at least one drawback of this proposal.	
Google “youtube simon moss humble meditation”. Listen to this video, called humble meditation.	<p>This YouTube video presents a meditation that lasts a bit over 20 minutes. The exercise, called humble meditation, introduces a range of peaceful exercises that also promote both mindfulness and humility. You can listen to this YouTube video often—as well as just listen to parts.</p> <p>Mindfulness may foster humility. For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mindfulness helps individuals modify their thought patterns—and thus may enhance the impact and benefits of the various exercises (Wang et al., 2023).</li><li>• mindfulness fosters respect towards diverse individuals, diminishing prejudice and discrimination (Lueke &amp; Gibson, 2016).</li></ul>

## Stability & continuity

Before you continue to foster humility, you should recognise and then overcome one of the key obstacles to this state. Specifically, in recent years, individuals have become increasingly unsure about their future. Their future seems hazy, uncertain, and unstable, exacerbated by rapid changes in technology, COVID-19, the threat of war, generative AI, and other events. In these circumstances,

- people are not as inclined to sacrifice their pleasure now to benefit their future,
- therefore, rather than attempt to develop skills that could be useful in future years, people want to feel good about themselves now,
- and, so, individuals overestimate their capabilities, diminishing their humility.

Fortunately, some practices have been shown to foster a sense of stability or continuity in a dynamic and uncertain world, overcoming these problems and promoting humility.





First, identify a vivid, significant moment or event you experienced in your past that is still relevant to who you are today—a moment and event that benefited your life and you remember often. To illustrate



- perhaps you received some advice or discovered some information that shaped your life,
- perhaps you achieved some important goal or met a significant person.

Relive this event in your mind, as vividly as possible, for a few minutes. After this exercise, people can imagine the future better (Biondolillo et al., 2023).



Second, imagine and then record an enjoyable or rewarding task you may be completing at work in two years—such as presenting an inspiring speech or assisting a child. Write about this event in some detail, such as who is nearby, the location of this event, the emotions you are experiencing, the activities that preceded or succeeded this event, and so forth. This exercise, called episodic future thinking, often increases the degree to which people are willing to sacrifice their pleasure now to benefit their future (Biondolillo et al., 2023).

Third, identify one or more activities that could benefit your health, relationships, or environment—activities that, until now, you have not undertaken frequently enough. Examples may include



- eating fruit during breakfast each morning,
- flossing teeth twice a day,
- calling a lonely relative every month,
- stretching every day, and so forth.

Record at least one of these activities here. To complete these activities, you may need to motivate yourself and resist other temptations. Such activities have been shown to enhance your capacity to resist temptations in other facets of your life as well (de Ridder et al., 2020).

Fourth, identify activities, interests, or goals you naturally pursue—and then convert these pursuits into an extremely ambitious, and perhaps unattainable, aspiration. To illustrate



- if you like photography, you could set the goal to publicise a social or environmental problem that many people overlook,
- if you like to cook, for example, perhaps set the aspiration to design a menu that is designed to prevent diabetes,
- if you like technology and travel, you could set the goal to visit every nation in Asia and teach disadvantaged people how to develop apps,
- if you like to speak other languages, you could set the goal to become a translator in a language that few people speak,
- if you like gardening, may be set the goal to create a permaculture farm that supports the local community and biodiversity.

Record one or two ambitious, if not unattainable, aspirations here. These aspirations have been shown to foster a sense of stability.

Fifth, imagine yourself in a future role that is compatible with one of these aspirations. Consider which of your skills, qualities, networks, or opportunities you could utilise and enhance to pursue this role. Then, record some practice or activity that both improves your capability to secure this role in the future and could be completed every week or so for decades ahead. Here are some examples:



- twice a week, you might trial an AI tool that is relevant to your field,
- every week, you may seek advice from a different person,
- every week, you might read about a development in your industry,
- every fortnight, you might learn a new recipe or song on the guitar.

Please record one to three of these activities here. These sustainable activities also foster a sense of stability in life.



Finally, over time, you should develop resources and materials you could use in the future to secure these fulfilling roles as well as thrive in these roles. Here are some examples:



- you might accumulate some responses to emails that may be useful if you are granted these roles,
- you may even accumulate recommendations you would like to express to this future image of yourself.

Perhaps record in this space other possible examples of resources and materials you could develop and accrue. Besides humility, these exercises tend to evoke positive emotions, such as enthusiasm (Mao & Li, 2024).

### Did you know



If people feel a sense of continuity—a sense their values, goals, and life in ten years will overlap with their values, goals, and life now—they are more likely to feel authentic and perceive their life as meaningful (Hong et al., 2024). This sense of meaning enhances their wellbeing and happiness (He et al., 2023).



The facilitator should then collate these practices and activities—and instruct the team to

- sort these practices and activities into clusters,
- identify which of these clusters may be relevant to the organisation,
- formulate a few objectives or actions the team could pursue in the future that enable members to complete the sustainable practices and activities at work.

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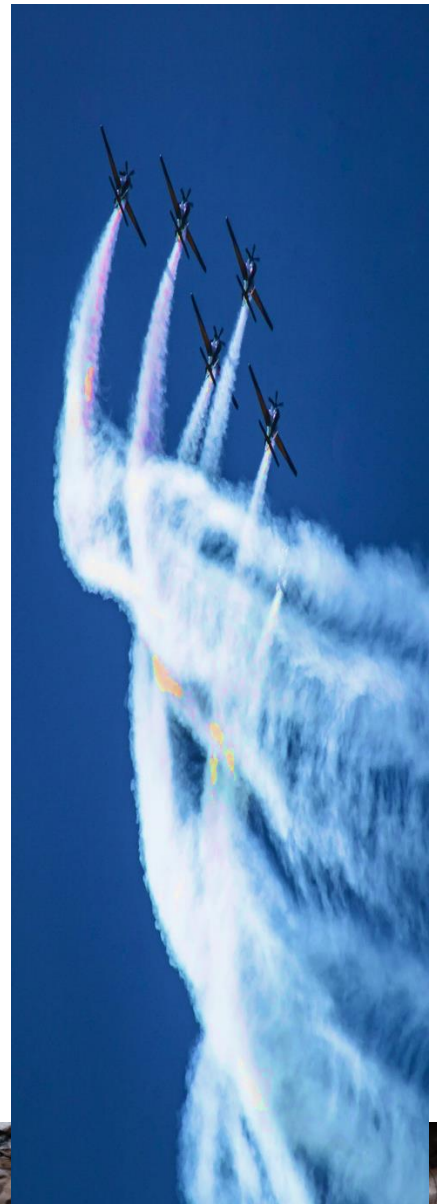
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## The benefits of awe

Feelings of awe or wonder elicits a sense of humility (Stellar et al., 2018) and continuity (Pan & Jiang, 2022) as well as similar consequences (Zhang et al., 2025). Awe can also diminish rumination and thus may dampen feelings of depression (Bogaert et al., 2024.) Several reasons can explain why awe fosters humility:

- when people experience a sense of awe, their attention shifts from daily trivialities to magnificent possibilities.
- Individuals who feel awe become aware of possibilities that transcend their understanding, demonstrating their ignorance and fostering humility (Krumrei Mancuso et al., 2024),
- even reflections about sacred, divine, miraculous, or blessed experiences also promotes this humility for similar reasons (Krumrei Mancuso et al., 2024).

Furthermore, when a team of individuals experience this awe together, they are more likely to feel a sense of camaraderie with one another (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003) .



In the following space, record some opportunities in which you may be able to experience awe. For example, you could

Examples of awe

- watch people complete awesome feats, like juggling while completing the Rubik’s cube—often on the reddit site “nextfuckinglevel”,
- observe footage of majestic landscapes, huge canyons, or outer space on YouTube,
- reminisce about times in which you felt awe and amazement,
- visit a remarkable landmark, such as a mountain view.
- watch an eclipse, fireworks, or aurora,
- observe the night sky in a remote location,
- watch the performance of exemplary magicians; these experiences have also been shown to foster curiosity (Subbotsky et al., 2010)—a key feature of humility and determinant of resilience in stressful circumstances (Kaczmarek et al., 2024).
- read facts that depict the colossal magnitude of some natural or scientific features, as illustrated in the list below.

Then, every week, or at least as often as you, attempt to experience a moment of awe and wonder. While experiencing these feelings,, reflect upon your goals.



Bensford law: In many datasets—such as the house prices, electricity bills, and lengths of rivers—about 30% of numbers begin with a 1, 17% begin with a 2, and progressively fewer numbers begin with higher digits.



52! exceeds the number of atoms in this galaxy.

One drop of water contains about 1.67 sextillion molecules, in which sextillion is 1 followed by 21 0s, like the number of observable stars.



The Great Wall of China is longer than is the distance from England to NZ.

In small workgroups, identify some opportunities in which the team may be able to experience awe together. For example, they could

Examples of awe

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- read facts that depict the colossal magnitude of some natural or scientific features, as illustrated in the list below.

Then, during the session, as well as perhaps several times a year, the team should attempt to experience a moment of awe and wonder together. After these moments, members could discuss changes to the vision or practices of this team.



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# Strength spotting

Humble people appreciate diverse individuals and, therefore, should excel in strength spotting: the capacity to identify the strengths and qualities of other people (Linley et al., 2010; Tobias et al., 2024). Yet, many individuals are not especially adept in identifying these strengths in other people. Instead, to develop this skill, you could

- in the first column of the following table, list the names of friends and colleagues,
- in the second column, enter 1 or 1 strengths of each person—perhaps deriving these strengths from the earlier table that attached a drawback or limitation to each strength.

Person	Strength	Strength after conversation
e.g., Jane Smith	Optimistic	Coding
.		



Next, when you next speak to each person, you may uncover some of their other strengths. Specifically,



- you may detect moments in which they demonstrate joy, energy, confidence, or passion when they refer to some activity,
- or individuals may refer to activities in which they thrived, sustained over a long period, or learned rapidly,
- these activities tend to represent potential strengths.



## Roles of participants

Whenever you feel these conversations reveal a strength, record this strength in the third column of the following table. If possible, inform people of the strengths you observe, such as “I feel you develop rapport with people easily”. Then seek feedback, such as “Has this strength developed over time?” or “Are you able to utilise this strength?” When combined, these activities enhance your capacity to detect strengths and thus may

- foster your humility, as you recognise the qualities of other people,
- improve your skills, as you identify qualities you could perhaps emulate or develop,
- improve your capacity to invigorate other individuals by highlighting their strengths;

### Did you know



After individuals consider their strengths and networks, their life tends to feel more significant as well as meaningful (O’Dea et al., 2004; Soto et al., 2024).



These activities are helpful because of several reasons. Specifically, when people are attuned to their strengths or utilise their strengths at work

- they experience a greater sense of vitality and engagement at work, especially if colleagues recognise these strengths (Moore et al., 2022),
- they feel more aligned to the organization, because they feel the workplace recognises their capabilities (Wang & Ding, 2024), enhancing their commitment,
- hence, they feel more inclined to assist their colleagues—but only if their workload is reasonable instead of excessive (Wang & Ding, 2024).

# Practices that foster resilience to feedback



In response to feedback, failures, setbacks, or other challenges, some people experience powerful emotions—and are unable to moderate or temper these feelings. So, to prevent these emotions, they dismiss their flaws or failings, manifesting as narcissism or conceit. In contrast, if people feel they can moderate or temper unpleasant emotions, they are more willing to embrace challenges or feedback (e.g., Soto et al., 2024). To achieve this goal



- skim the following lists of strategies you can use to regulate unpleasant feelings in response to various challenges,
- identify five strategies that differ most from your usual approaches—and then practice one of these strategies each week—an approach that significantly improves wellbeing and resilience (Heintzelman et al., 2023),
- in the future, if you experience unpleasant feelings in response to challenges, revisit this list and apply one of the strategies.

Physical Activity	Illustration or justification
Whenever you feel distressed or upset, attempt to smile, at least briefly. You may, for example, remember a joke that tends to elicit some laughter.	When exposed to stressful environments, people who smile—either deliberately or inadvertently—are not as likely to show the signs of stress. They do not, for example, exhibit a pronounced increase in their heart rate but report a more positive mood in stressful environments (Kraft & Pressman, 2012). Presumably, when individuals smile, they tend to experience the feelings they associate with this facial expression, at least momentarily.
Attempt some activity that evokes mild pain.	You could exercise or stretch more vigorously than usual. Or you could position an ice pack next to your skin. Mild feelings of pain can limit the rumination and worry when disappointed or dejected (Harmon-Jones et al., 2019).





Helpful images or sensations

Mental images can also enhance resilience. For example, if you imagine your romantic partner—or a fictional partner in the future—touching you gently to comfort you, your stress abates; and you feel more courage to attempt challenging tasks (Jakubiak & Feeney, 2016)

Mental image	Illustration or justification
<p>If worried about an impending event—such as an exam—visualise yourself in this circumstance, but from the perspective of an impartial observer. Imagine you are another person, watching this event unfold. Maintain this image for several minutes. As you maintain this image, label the emotions this person might be experiencing. And consider why this person might be experiencing these emotions.</p>	<p>When people imagine a stressful or distressing event from the perspective of someone else (Kross &amp; Ayduk, 2008)—or consider why they may be experiencing some emotion (Kross et al., 2005)—they experience a sense of distance from this event; the event feels remote and not as immediate. Because the event does not seem as quite as threatening, the intensity of unpleasant emotions, such as anxiety, dissipates (Vieira et al., 2024)</p> <p>Perhaps for the same reason, when people describe the sensations or emotions in their body, called affect labelling, the intensity of these feelings subsides (Tabibnia et al., 2008).</p>
<p>Close your eyes. Repeat to yourself, about five times, a statement like...</p> <p>When I receive distressing information or feel stressed, I will say to myself—or to someone else—"Let me think about this matter for a while, and I am confident I will think of a solution later</p> <p>Then, imagine yourself, as vividly as possible, expressing these words in response to a particular stressful event.</p>	<p>After completing this exercise, called an implementation intention, you will, naturally and seamlessly, calm yourself, rather than react impulsively to distressing or upsetting events. This delay may contain your emotions (Gallo et al., 2009), demonstrate composure, and grant you enough time to experience an intuition on how you should proceed.</p>

To promote resilient, speak to yourself supportively

Talk to yourself supportively— like how a supportive friend might encourage and assist you. For example, when deciding how to resolve a problem or respond to a failure, you might say to yourself



- “You do not have to follow anyone but can choose your own way”,
- “To decide how I will respond, I will consider my values, feelings, and what is really important to me”,

Dialogue that reminds people of their right to choose actions that resonate with their values instils a sense of autonomy—a feeling that improves wellbeing and increases the likelihood that life seems meaningful (Sheldon et al., 2021).

Speak to yourself	Illustration or justification
Consider the benefits of unpleasant events you experience—such as failures or criticisms, called reappraisal or reframing. However, before you attempt this activity, first immerse yourself in a short activity that can improve your emotions—such as watch a funny video.	<p>For example, suppose you failed to secure a job or pass an exam. You might consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• insights or lessons you learned from this experience—such as how to prevent this problem in the future,</li><li>• how this event may shift and clarify your future goals,</li><li>• desirable attributes you demonstrated, such as resilience despite the disappointment</li><li>• desirable attributes you gained, such as empathy,</li><li>• relationships you consolidated, such as the support that a friend demonstrated,</li></ul> <p>If you practice this skill—and even record times in which you felt upset but then reframed the event—wellbeing tends to improve (Kam et al. 2024). This skill is especially helpful if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• you cannot readily change or modify the consequences of this event and, therefore, can only change your thoughts about this event (Kam et al. 2024),</li><li>• before you reframe your thoughts, you distract yourself for a couple of minutes to diminish the intensity of your emotions (Kam et al. 2024; Sheppes &amp; Meiran, 2007).</li><li>• your thoughts mainly revolve around how this event could benefit your future (Vlasenko et al., 2024).</li></ul>

Speak to yourself continued	Illustration or justification
Whenever you experience more stress than usual, speak to yourself compassionately.	<p>Consider the kind and empathic words you would express to a distressed child. Then direct similar word to yourself. For example, you may express words like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “you really have experienced a tough week”,</li><li>• “everybody commits mistakes; you do not need to be upset by mistakes”.</li></ul> <p>When individuals practice this exercise, they gradually associate stress with feelings of support and comfort. So, their stress dissipates rapidly. Consequently, the combination of stress and self-compassion tends to improve resilience over time (Park et al., 2024).</p>





Journals of helpful thoughts

Some journals of helpful thoughts—such as a record of the people and activities in your life that tend to improve your wellbeing or emotions—can be helpful. Even when merely aware of individuals and activities that evoke pleasant feelings, people are more likely to feel happy and content (van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2023).

A record of successful challenges

Maintain a record of times in which you completed a stressful task well. Immediately before you need to complete similar tasks, visualise this previous success as vividly as possible.



After people recall a time in which they successfully completed a stressful task, such as spoke in public, they perform this activity more effectively in the future. They also experience less stress, as gauged by measures of cortisol in the blood (Pezdeklow & Salima, 2011). Autobiographical memories thus affect the physiological processes and behaviour of individuals.

Journal entries	Illustration or justification
Maintain a record of some enjoyable or rewarding events and changes you are likely to experience in the next few months.	<p>If people anticipate that, later, they will experience positive emotions, they are also more likely to be resilient now. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in one study, if participants assumed they will later watch a funny rather than unfunny cartoon, they experienced more positive emotions while preparing to present a speech (Monfort, Stroup, &amp; Waugh, 2014)</li><li>• indeed, anticipating a positive event later was more effective than experiencing a positive event several minutes earlier.</li></ul>

Journal entries continued	Illustration or justification
Maintain a record of a moment in which you felt true to yourself—such as reached a decision or initiated some behaviour that felt authentic. Alternatively, record activities you could undertake in the future to feel more authentic.	<p>After people recall moments in which they felt authentic—or actually feel more authentic—they are more likely to experience positive emotions as well as a sense of meaning, purpose, and thriving in life (Guenther et al., 2024). To experience this authenticity, you could</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• skim the following list of examples that illustrate authentic behaviours,</li><li>• recall and record a time in which you felt authentic in the past—and reminisce about this moment for a few minutes,</li><li>• or visualise yourself behaving more authentically in the future.</li></ul>



Possible examples of authentic behaviours

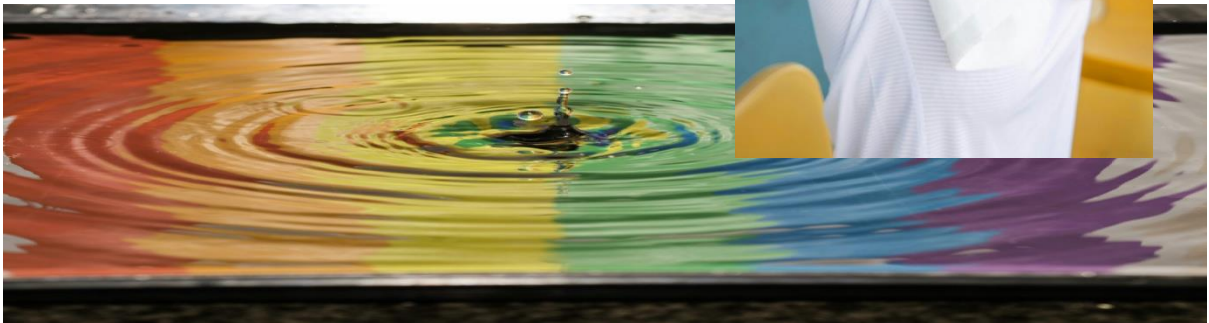


- I admitted a problem I was experiencing to a friend.
- I no longer acted like I knew what I was doing.
- I expressed an opinion that differed from the attitudes of friends.
- I chose a job or hobby that felt meaningful and not merely lucrative.
- When attending an event, I wore clothes that felt natural to me.
- I expressed my concerns about a decision that I felt was unjust.

Helpful goals and plans

The goals you set and how you plan your days, weeks, or months may also shape your resilience. For example, if you feel If you feel you may be worrying or ruminating a lot, attempt to defer your concerns to a specific time later in the week.

- That is, if you feel inundated with worries, first record a few vague ideas on how you could address this problem. Next, choose to defer these worries to a specific time, later in the week like 7 pm to 8 pm on Thursday evening.
- When people confine their worries to a specific time of the week, they are not as likely to worry excessively (McGowan & Behar, 2013).
- Conversely, if people attempt to suppress rumination, these worries often return, usually more intensely than before.



Helpful plans	Illustration or justification
After some failure or disappointment, generate as many ideas—even vague or unrealistic possibilities—on how you could prevent a similar problem in the future as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attempt to generate these possibilities as rapidly as possible—such as 20 possibilities in 2 minutes—without judging the feasibility of these solutions (Litchfield, 2009).</li><li>• After people choose to think or to read very rapidly, their mood improves significantly (Pronin, Jacobs, &amp; Wegner, 2008).</li></ul>



Helpful plans continued	Illustration or justification
Perceive feedback, failures, and similar challenges as opportunities to derive lessons you could impart to other people (Carlson & Fishbach, 2024).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set yourself the goal to identify 10 lessons from such feedback or similar challenges.</li><li>• Identify opportunities in which you may be able to impart these lessons to someone else—especially to someone who has experienced some challenges.</li></ul>
If you feel you failed to complete a task well, uncover opportunities to attempt this task again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• After individuals fail on some task, they tend to underestimate the pleasure they will experience if they perform well on the task later (Sjåstad et al., 2020). They also often perform better on this task than anticipated.</li></ul>
Write a couple of paragraphs about who you really are—your true character—in some detail	<p>For example, you could write about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• anything that you are passionate about, including passions you seldom express,</li><li>• how you would like the world to be in 10 years or aspirations you could achieve then,</li><li>• a couple of your strengths or talents that could help you achieve these aspirations,</li><li>• any progress you may have forged on these aspirations.</li></ul> <p>After people describe their true character in detail, they are more likely to perceive their life as meaningful (Schlegel et al., 2011). And, after individuals contemplate their values and strengths, called self-affirmation, they can withstand stress better (Creswell et al., 2005).</p>

