

Highlights

The highlights

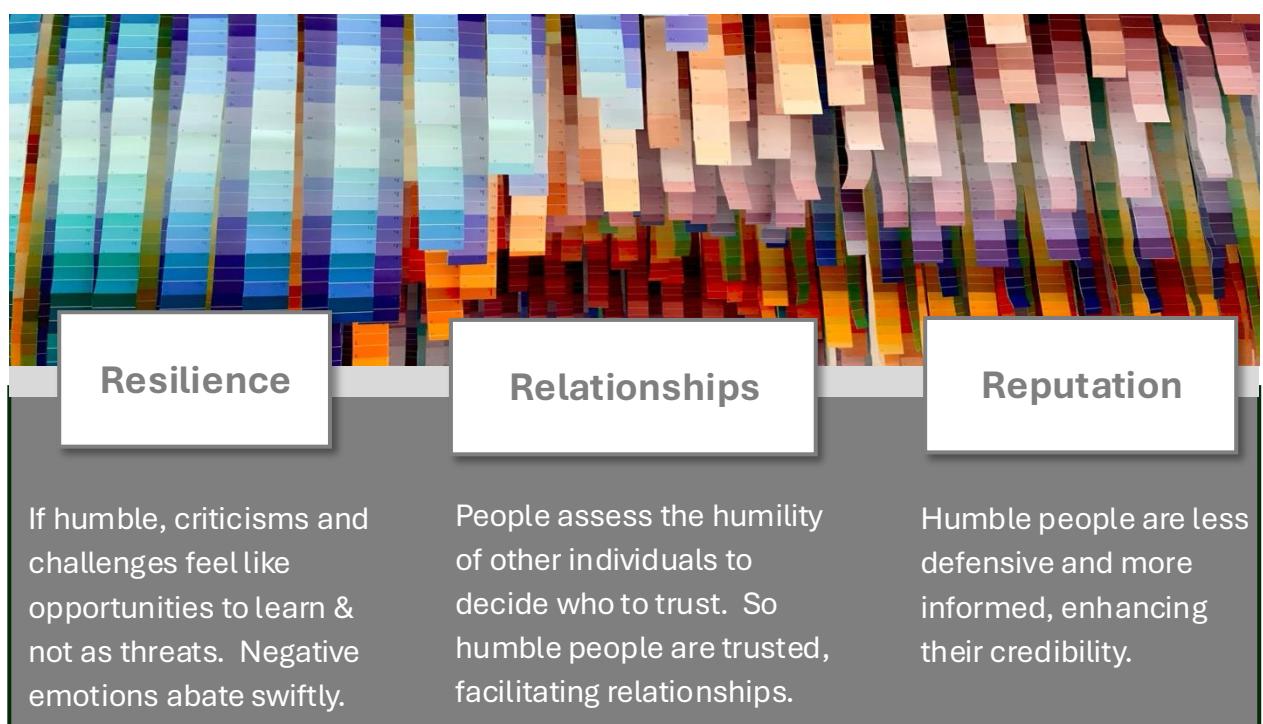
Recently, researchers have discovered a **specific mental state or attribute** that resolves most problems in life—such as addictions, aggression, bullying, and other social problems



- What is this state or attribute? In essence, when people experience this state, their primary goal is to learn from other people and experiences.
- This state or attribute roughly corresponds to the quality we call humility.

The benefits of humility

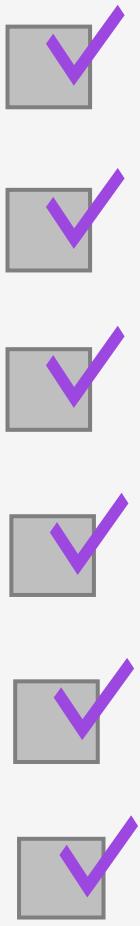
When people are humble, their resilience, relationships, and reputation all improve. In contrast to some misconceptions, humility often coincides with a sense of conviction, passion, and curiosity rather than a low self-esteem or a meek personality.



Initial attempts to foster humility



Here are some practices that foster humility. If you want to foster humility in other people, such as your children or colleagues, perhaps apply these practices yourself first. These activities will enable you to role model humility and inspire other people to follow.



- Identify occasions in the future in which you may be able to acknowledge some of your limitations or faults to other people.
- About once a month, deliberately engage in an activity that elicits modest levels of anxiety or stress, such as speaking in public.
- Over time, gradually increase the number of people—such as colleagues or friends—from whom you occasionally seek advice.
- Occasionally, express genuine rather than feigned compliments to people, especially people who differ appreciably from you.
- After a conversation, refer to what you learned from the other person, expressing phrases like “Until now, I had not realised...”
- Whenever you express a suggestion, attempt to highlight at least one drawback of this proposal (Xu & Petty, 2022, 2024).
- Set the goal to learn at least one lesson a month from a failure—and then record this lesson. Failures thus feel like opportunities.
- Occasionally, convey the benefits of humility to other people. After people advise someone to apply some practice, they feel motivated to apply this practice too (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2018).

Limitations of these practices



These practices are not sufficient to sustain humility—or to generate the benefits of humility—in stressful and challenging circumstances. That is, these practices alone will not instil in people the profound motivation to learn from other individuals and experiences.

Practices that foster humility sustainably



Here is a limited sample of practices that, when repeated over time, can gradually entrench humility. These practices can boost resilience, relationships, and reputation considerably and enduringly.

- Again, perhaps apply these practices yourself first before you inspire other people.
- Later sections will extend these practices & present evidence to validate these activities.

Enduring activities

When individuals perceive their future as vivid and certain—as well as feel their values and interests in ten years will be like their values and interests now—they feel motivated to learn from other people and experiences. They show humility. To foster this state

- identify activities, interests, or goals you naturally pursue—and then convert these pursuits into a very ambitious, and perhaps unattainable, aspiration,
- imagine yourself in some future roles that are compatible with this aspiration,
- record some practice or activity that you would like to complete every week or so for decades ahead and improves your capacity to secure these roles in the future.

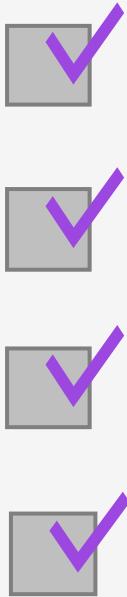
For example, your aspiration might be to help disadvantaged people use AI more efficiently. Every week, you could read about more efficient methods to use AI.

Practices that foster humility sustainably continued

To develop humility, individuals need to enhance their resilience—their tendency to recover in response to distressing or upsetting events, such as failures or criticisms. Otherwise, they will seem defensive rather than humble. These activities help foster this resilience.



Here are some practices that foster resilience. Later, we will discuss why these practices may be more powerful than many people realise.



- Whenever you feel distressed, attempt to smile, at least briefly. You could try to remember a joke that tends to elicit some laughter.
- Whenever you feel stressed, imagine your romantic partner—or a fictional partner in the future—touching you gently to comfort you.
- After some failure, generate as many ideas as possible—even vague or unrealistic possibilities—on how you could prevent a similar problem in the future. You can use AI to complete this task.
- Perceive feedback, failures, and similar challenges as opportunities to derive lessons you could impart to other people.
- Close your eyes. Repeat to yourself, about five times, a statement like the following:

Whenever I feel distressed or upset, 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"...

Practices that foster humility sustainably continued

Experience feelings of awe

- Reminisce about times in which you experienced a sense of awe and amazement—such as when you observed a remarkable mountain view, a huge canyons, fireworks, an aurora, or a great performance.
- Attempt to arrange opportunities that could evoke similar emotions at least once a month—such as watch videos that elicit awe. This emotion tends to foster humility.



Experience gratitude

Over time, collate a list of people to whom you feel grateful. To sustain feelings of gratitude—feelings that have been shown to foster humility—perhaps once a month,

- write an email or text in which you thank this person and explain why you feel grateful,
- express praise towards this individual,
- communicate to another person the gratitude you feel towards some individuals or opportunities,
- attempt to uncover opportunities to perform an act of kindness towards the people to whom you are grateful.

How to change defensive or narcissistic people

Often, we need to interact with defensive, arrogant, or narcissistic people—at work, at home, and in our daily lives. Fortunately, we can apply a range of strategies to gradually shape the behaviour of these people over time. Here is an outline of these strategies:



During a conversation with this person, incidentally ridicule someone this person does not know who seems obsessed with his or her status or importance



Subtly encourage this person to acknowledge a fault or mistake



When this person shows a moment of humility, reward this moment with admiration

Example: “The person you criticised sounds annoying. Reminds me of someone I know who always exaggerates his skills, boasts about his car, and never admits to any mistakes”.

Example: “I did not perform well at work today. Have you ever committed a mistake at work?”

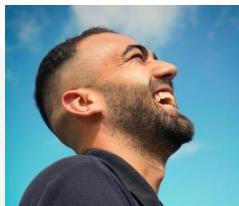
Example: “I think you would be a much better leader than bosses I have seen who are unable to acknowledge their mistakes or limitations”

Why is this approach effective?



In short, you may, over time, be able to temper narcissistic tendencies in other people if you

- ridicule a defensive or arrogant person they do not know ,
- encourage these individuals to demonstrate moments of humility, and then
- show admiration to reward this humility



These strategies may be effective because



- narcissistic people often engage in conversations in which they can ridicule or mock someone else,
- references to the word “ever” or “any”, such as “have you ever committed a mistake at work”, tends to promote some admissions,
- defensive or narcissistic people are especially likely to repeat behaviours that had attracted some admiration or respect.

Definitions, benefits, and drawbacks of humility

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, 2025a).

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 extend 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).

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.

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).

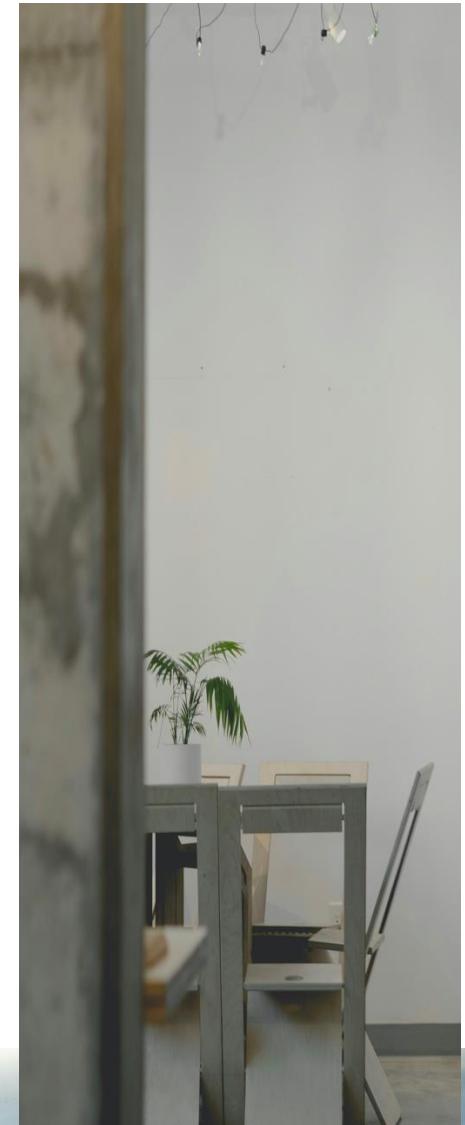
The drawbacks of humility

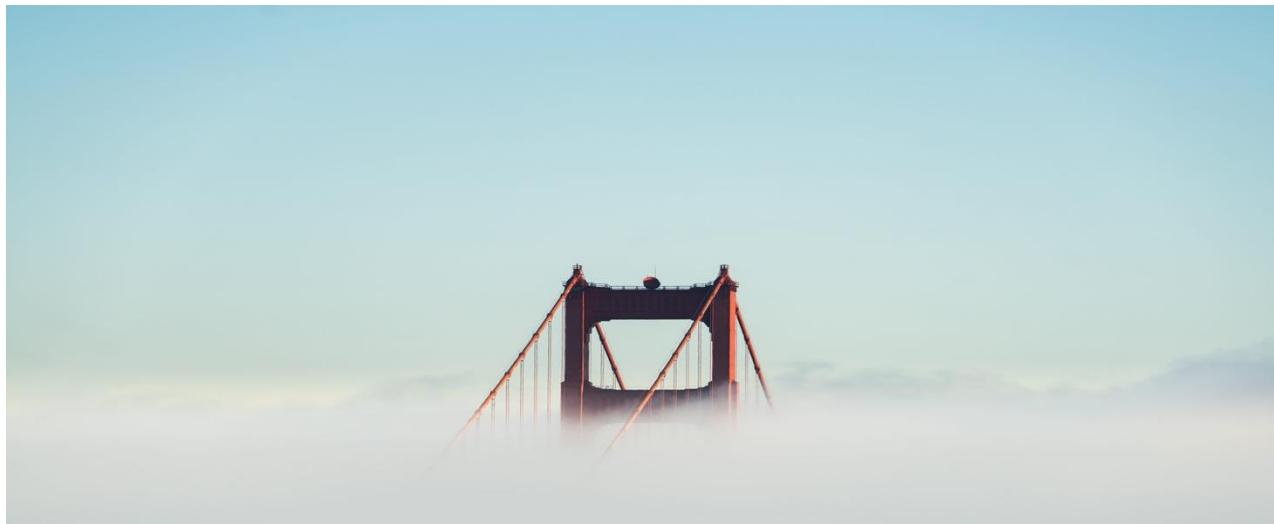
In the following space, list what you feel might be the drawbacks of humility. For example, you might assume that people who are humble do not feel assured and confident.



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 & 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 seem unsure	People who are humble often acknowledge multiple—and sometimes even conflicting—perspectives about an issue, such as face masks. The audience thus feel their opinions are understood and thus tend to trust and respect humble individuals (see Xu & Petty, 2022, 2024).

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).

Interventions that relate to humility

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:

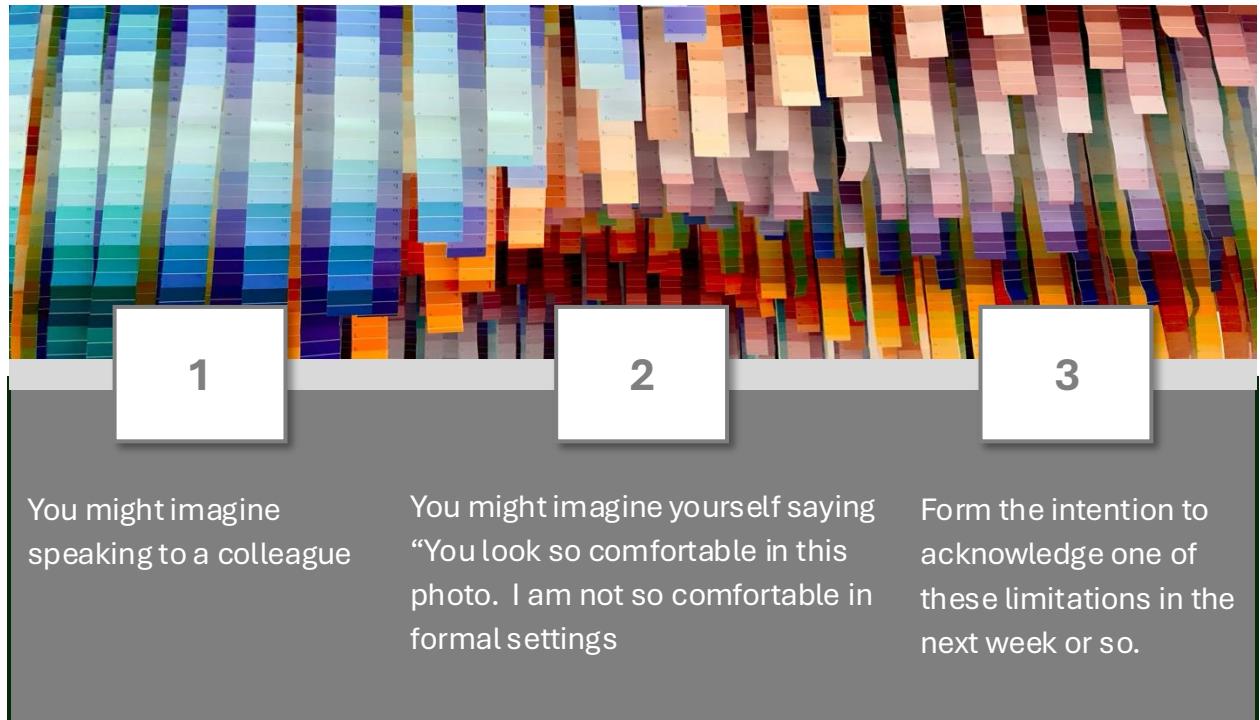


- first skim the left column in the following table, representing common strengths,
- identify between two and four strengths that you feel you have developed or demonstrated,
- for each of these strengths, consider the corresponding drawbacks or complications that appear in the right column.

Strength	Corresponding drawback or limitation
Persuasive in debates and negotiations	You may not always listen effectively or shift your opinions in response to useful information.
Leads people effectively	You feel uneasy when you cannot shape decisions
Courageously expresses opinions that people may not like	You may offend or hurt people unnecessarily—or may overlook the merits of alternative arguments.
Confident and sociable 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.
Collaborates effectively with other people	You may not always feel confident reaching decisions alone.
Sympathetic and caring 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
Rationale; can use evidence and numbers to reach decisions	You may reach decisions that overlook the broader perspective
Intuitive and able to trust hunches to reach decisions	<p>You may not be able to justify your decisions effectively.</p> <p>Your decisions may be biased by your own preferences.</p>
Careful and able to identify and to prevent risks	You may overlook beneficial but uncertain opportunities
Open to novel ideas and changes	You may perceive your work as tedious and unstimulating
Intelligent and able to understand complicated or intangible ideas	You may not always be practical enough to achieve goals efficiently
Creative and able to suggest novel, helpful, and diverse ideas.	You may disregard useful but conventional practices prematurely or struggle with routines
Adaptable and flexible enough to accommodate diverse circumstances or people	You may sometimes feel inauthentic or uncertain about what you really believe
Disciplined; sacrifices pleasure now to pursue future goals	You may not appreciate your environment or situation enough.
Persistent and conscientious	You may persist on tasks too long rather than change your course of direction when necessary.
Resilient 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.
Relaxed and composed , seldom showing unpleasant emotions	You may not plan effectively to avoid problems. Or you may perceive your relationships as superficial rather than genuine.
Ambitious; strives to fulfill steep goals	You may not maintain and nurture your friendships and relationships—and may feel detached from other people and exhausted.
Decisive ; 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...



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”.

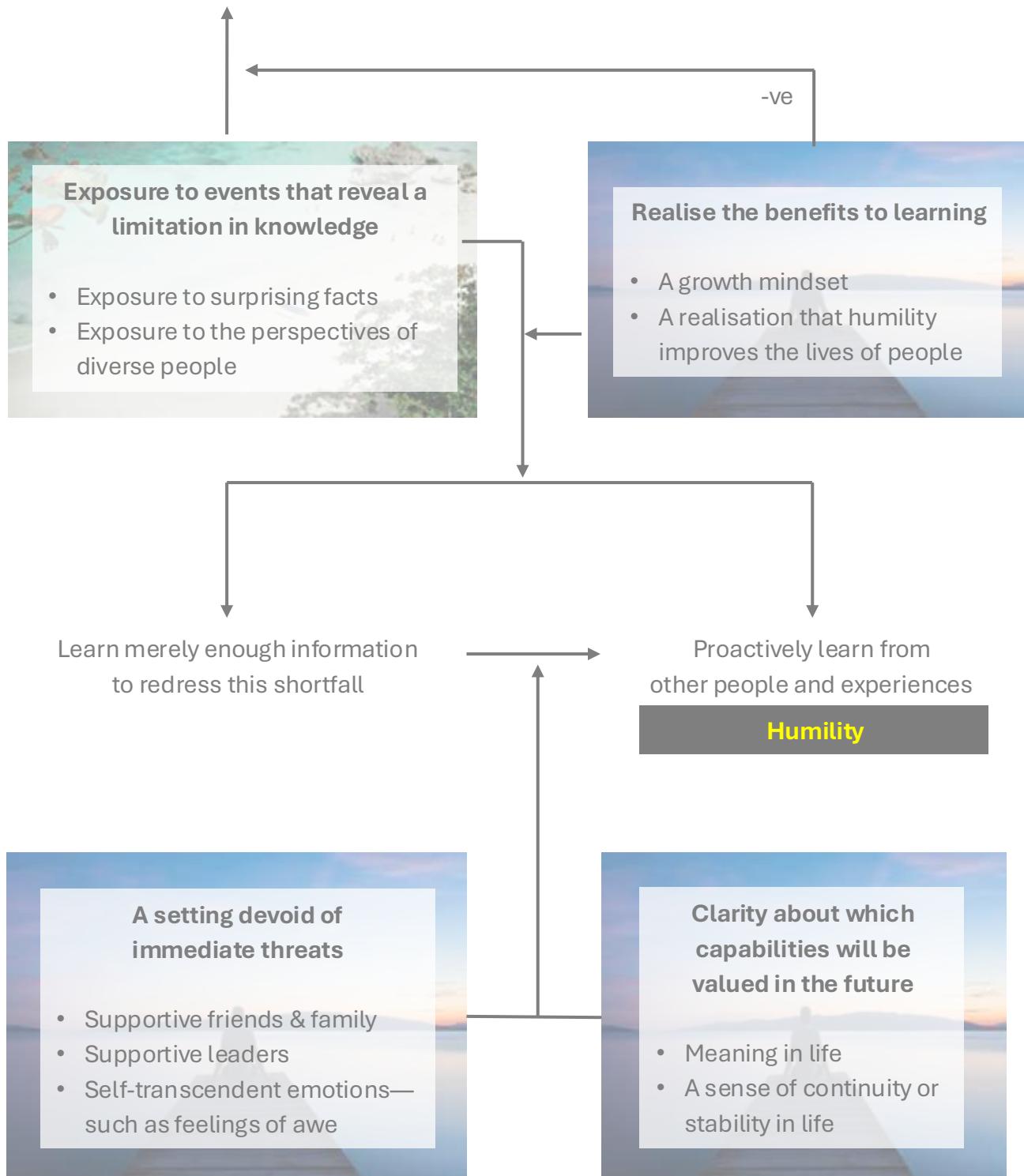
This activity, called an implementation intention, has been shown to significantly increase the likelihood you will fulfill one of your plans.

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>

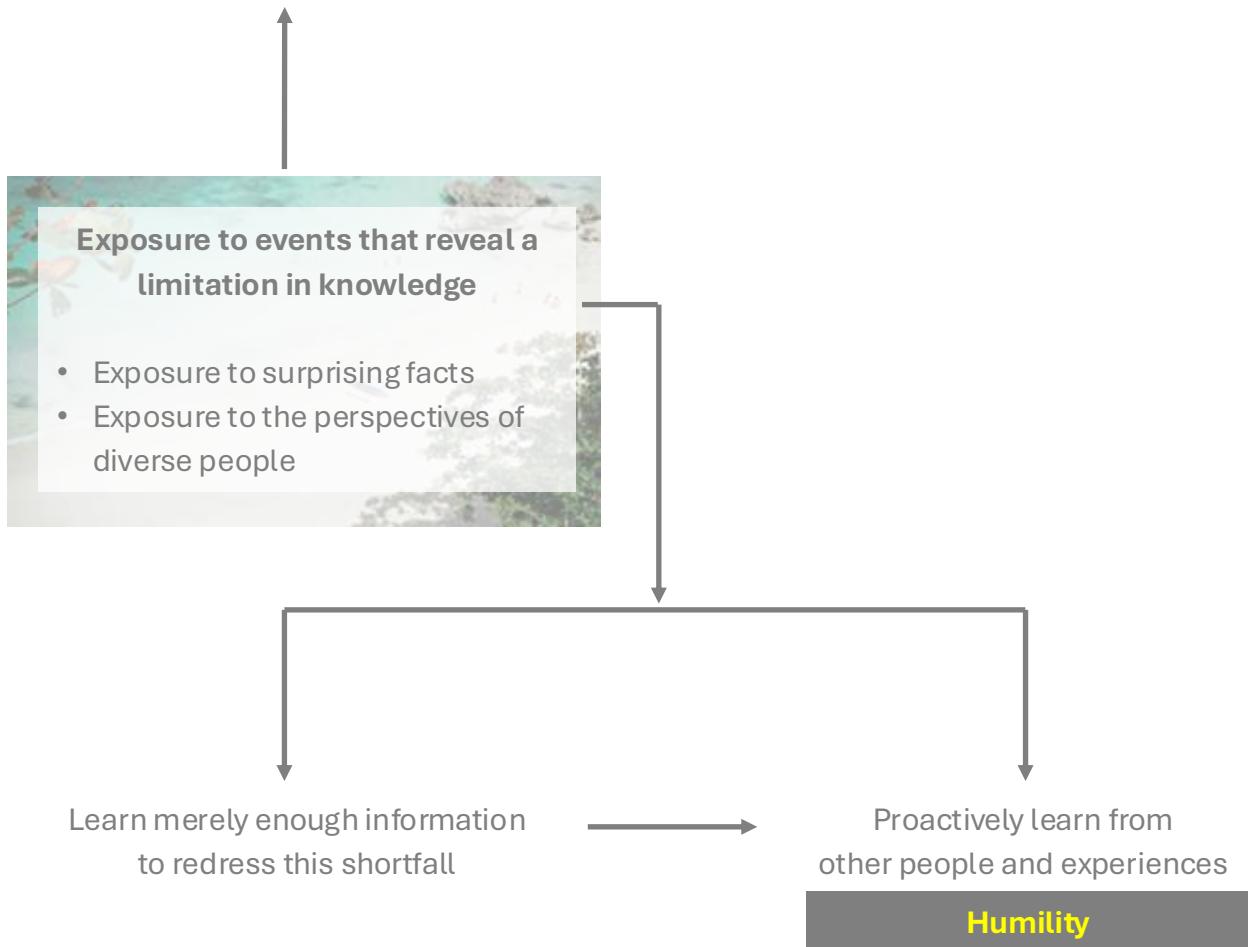
Activity continued	Illustration or justification
<p>Over time, gradually increase the number of people—such as colleagues, mentors, friends, or relatives—from whom you occasionally seek advice.</p>	<p>That is, gradually develop a list of people from whom you can seek advice. Then, formulate a plan on 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>
<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>	<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 & Raver, 2021).</p>
<p>Whenever you express a suggestion, highlight at least one drawback of this proposal.</p>	
<p>Google “youtube simon moss humble meditation”. Listen to this video, called humble meditation.</p>	<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"> • mindfulness helps individuals modify their thought patterns—and thus may enhance the impact and benefits of the various exercises (Wang et al., 2023). • mindfulness fosters respect towards diverse individuals, diminishing prejudice and discrimination (Lueke & Gibson, 2016).

The causes of humility: An overview

Disregard this shortfall in knowledge



Disregard this shortfall in knowledge



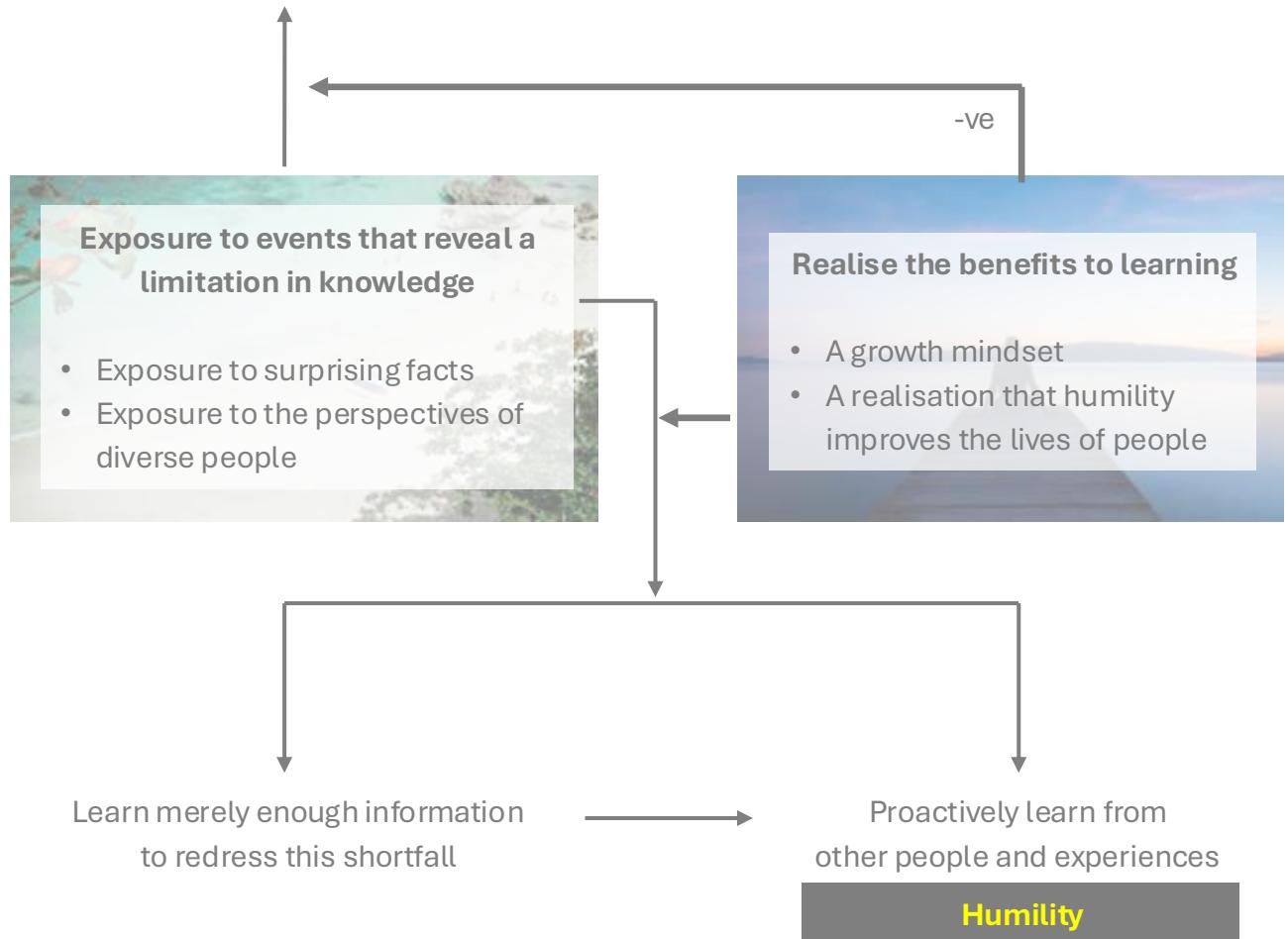
Exposure to unfamiliar information



In response to experiences that reveal a limitation in our knowledge, such as exposure to insights that contradict our beliefs, individuals can

- disregard this limitation in their knowledge
- learn only enough information to redress this limitation
- proactively learn from other people and experiences to prevent future limitations in their knowledge, manifesting as humility.

Disregard this shortfall in knowledge



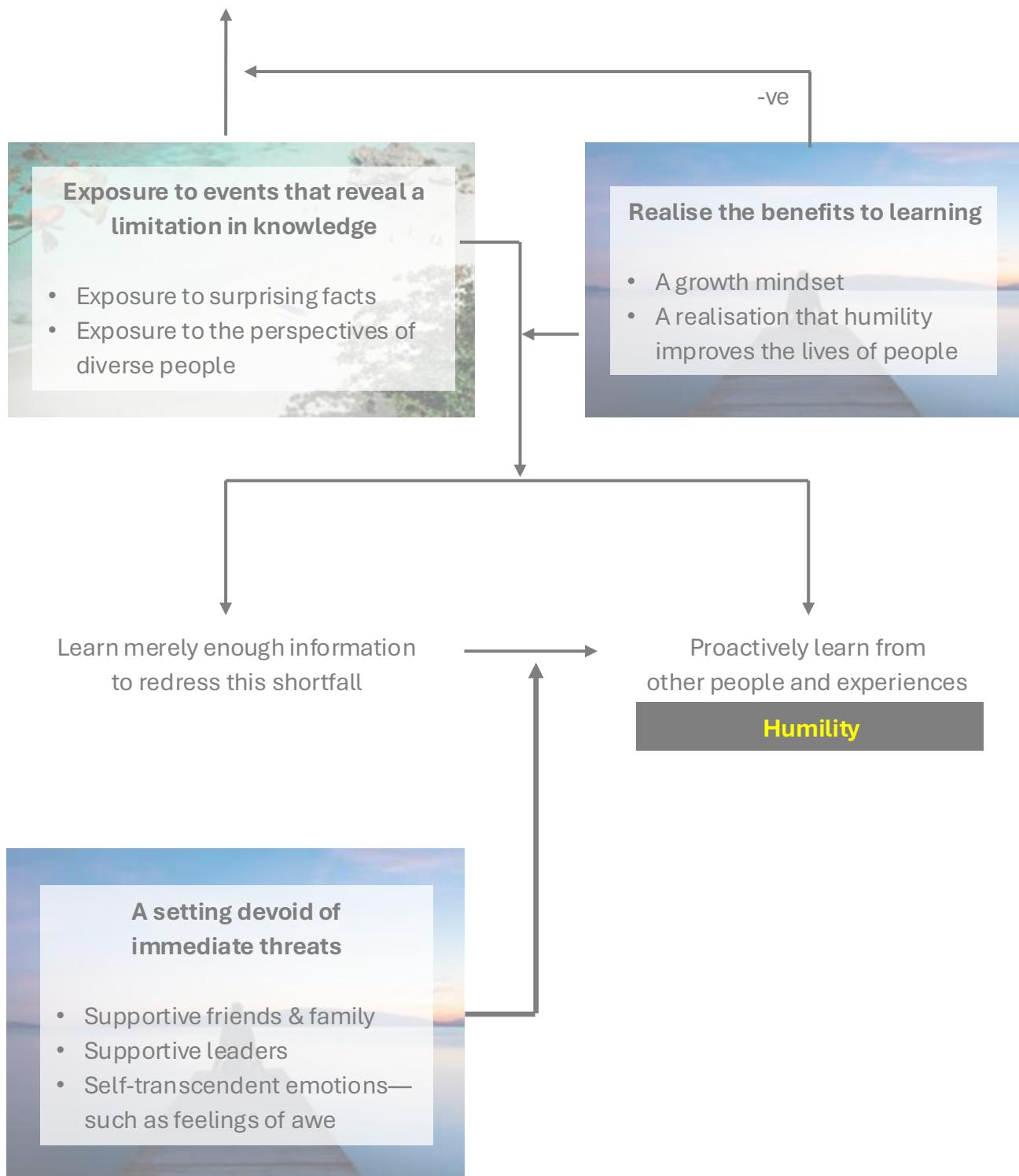
Recognition that learning can enhance our lives



If people are attuned to the benefits of learning, they become

- less inclined disregard this limitation in their knowledge
- more inclined to redress this limitation in their knowledge.

Disregard this shortfall in knowledge

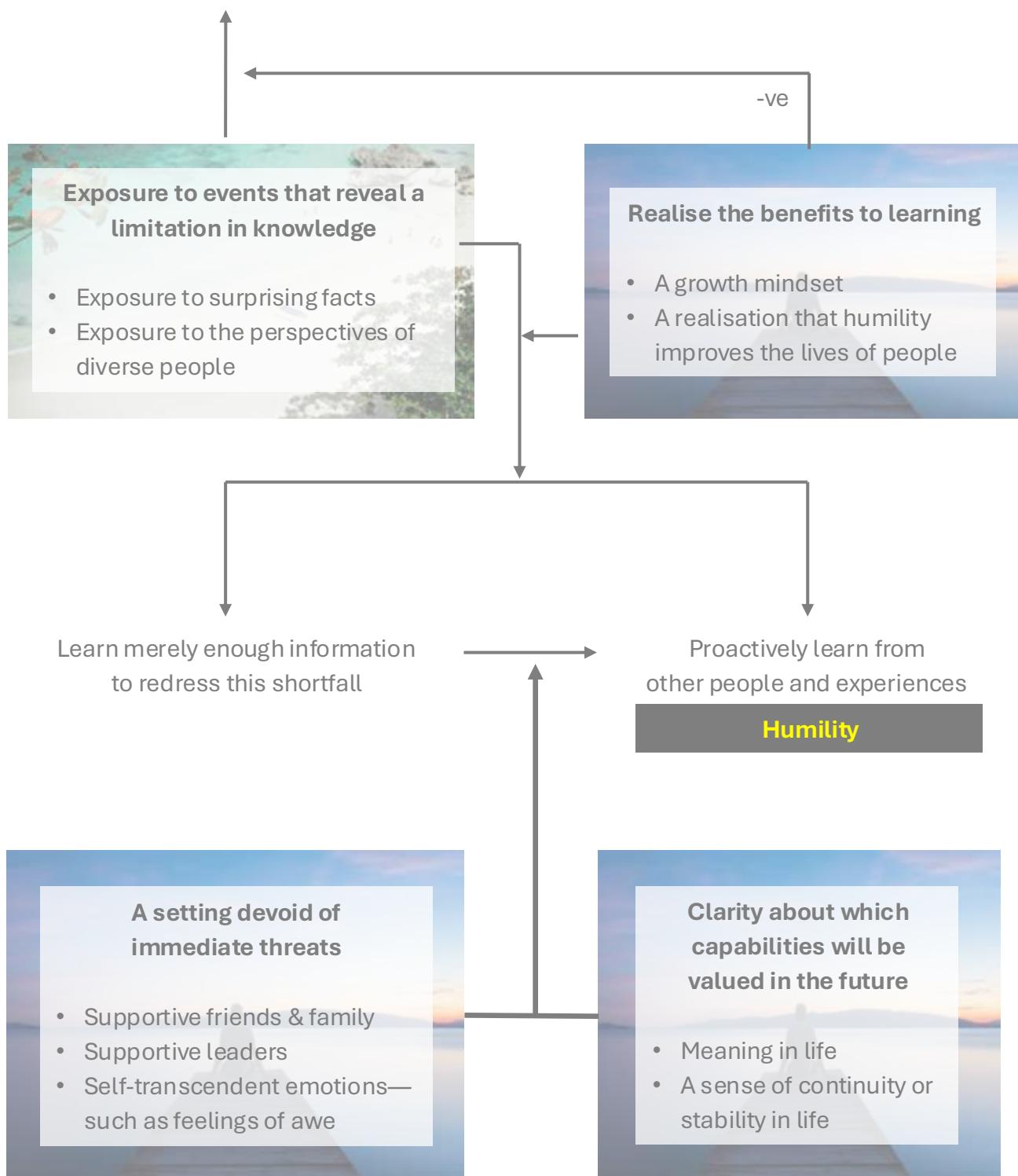


No immediate threats or problems



If people feel they need to address immediate threats or problems, they will learn only enough information to redress the existing limitation in their knowledge. They will not proactively learn from other people, curbing humility.

Disregard this shortfall in knowledge



Clarity over which capabilities will be valued



If people are unsure of their life in the future—and thus cannot ascertain which knowledge, skills, or qualities will be cherished then—they will not proactively learn from other people or experiences, diminishing humility .

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.

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 more 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).

Strength spotting

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- in the first column of the following table, list the names of colleagues in your team,
- in the second column, enter 1 or 2 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, pairs of participants should discuss what they have learned during this session and which insights they might apply in the future. During this conversation, attempt to uncover one or more strengths of this person. 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

Occasionally, apply the same approach when you converse with colleagues in the future. 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;

Role of facilitators

Finally, in this session, the facilitator should,

- randomly choose some of the strengths of individuals that were uncovered during this session,
- for each strength, encourage a small workgroup to consider how the team could utilise this strength more often at work.

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).

Humble listening

As research has revealed, during a conversation, when individuals feel the other person is listening carefully and genuinely, absorbed in the words they are hearing, their humility increases (Lehmann et al., 2023). Here are some possible reasons:

Why does someone listening intently to you fosters your humility?



If individuals feel someone else is listening carefully, they feel respected; they no longer feel the need to boost their status and thus feel assured enough to acknowledge their limitations.



If individuals feel someone else is listening carefully, they feel grateful. So, they become more attuned to the virtues and needs of this person. As the obsession with themselves dissipates, they become humble.

Perhaps more surprisingly, during this conversation, the person who is listening carefully and genuinely also experiences greater humility. Listening intently fosters humility (Lehmann et al., 2023). Which of the following reasons seem convincing to you?

Why does someone listening intently to you fosters your humility?



When people listen carefully, they are more likely to recognise and to accept perspectives that diverge from their own beliefs; therefore, they are more inclined to question their beliefs and assumptions.



When people listen carefully, they become more attuned to the needs and perspectives of this other person. Their obsession with themselves subsides, fostering humility

Humble listening: Relevance to you

Both these reasons have been validated. These findings indicate that, to foster humility, individuals need to learn how to entirely absorb themselves in the words of someone else.

Did you know



Leaders who listen well—encouraging other individuals to speak openly rather than interrupt or criticise—are perceived as more influential (Ames et al., 2012).



Most people overestimate the degree to which they listen intently. To illustrate, while the other person is speaking, what percentage of the time do you



- plan your response
- think about an unrelated matter at work or home you need to address
- judge the other person rather than listen unconditionally
- appraise your own behaviour?

These habits, if too frequent or prolonged, disrupt your capacity to be immersed in the words you are hearing, compromising your humility.

Humble listening: Recommendations

To become absorbed in the words you are hearing, you can apply an approach called humble listening. This approach not only fosters humility but also improves memory and learning. To apply humble listening

- skim the following practices or recommendations,
- mark the practices you might apply in the future,
- sometimes, perhaps once a week, decide you will apply one of these chosen practices,
- over time, these practices will hopefully become effortless.



Switch your **mobile phone** to silent and, if possible, store this phone in a bag or another spot in which the device is not readily accessible

Justification: When a mobile phone is accessible and not silent, people do not tend to feel immersed in the conversation (Dwyer et al., 2018).



Situate yourself so the other person is closer to your **left shoulder** than your right shoulder.

Justification: In this position, you primarily invoke your right hemisphere to process the mannerisms and behaviours of this person—and the right hemisphere integrates this information more effectively than does the left hemisphere (Puccinelli et al., 2024).



Seek opportunities to transcribe or **record a comment** that was interesting, amusing, informative, or different to expectations. You could say “I really like that comment. Can I write this comment down?”



If you disagree with a comment, say to yourself “I will accept what the person is saying now, and I can evaluate the comment later”. Then, express what you like about the comment, such as “I do like the idea that...”



If you feel defensive or want to establish your status or importance rather than listen, express a comment like “I want to deliberate on the nuances and implications of your arguments later—and I can then convey my thoughts in more detail

Justification: If your goal is to learn from these conversations, you are likely to feel and seem more receptive to diverse perspectives (Zhu & Akhtar, 2019)

Justification: If you defer judgment, you experience a state of mindfulness—a state that helps people immerse themselves in conversations (Jones et al. 2019).

Justification: This comment may fulfill your need to establish credibility, enabling you to absorb rather than prove yourself.





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 Paraphrase what you learned from the conversation, like “So, is what you are saying...?”. Then, express something like “I feel Greg would enjoy this topic”. Visualise the location in which you may convey these insights to someone else.

Justification: People are more likely to remember information they visually attach to a specific location, called a memory palace.

 Several days later, partly to reinforce memory, text or email the person what you learned.

Example: You might write, “Thanks for the conversation. I really liked your argument that...”

 While the other person is speaking, occasionally glance away to visualise the events and individuals described. If you visualise their words, you feel transported or absorbed in their story.

Justification: If you stare at someone intently rather than glance away, this person often becomes more defensive (Chen et al., 2013).



Meaningful conversations

If conversations are superficial or rushed, common in social media, humble listening may not be feasible. Indeed, when people use social media or other online platforms to communicate, they are more inclined to dislike each other (Carr, 2025). That is

- in these forums, people learn many superficial details about one another,
- they become aware of differences between themselves and other individuals,
- people tend to be more attuned to differences than similarities—and these differences often provoke distrust.

Recommendations to minimise this problem

- whenever possible, arrange settings in which you can readily converse with one or two people in some depth,
- in these settings, you are more likely to become attuned to motives or interests you share rather than superficial differences.

Identify an opportunity this month in which you can shift a superficial interaction into a meaningful conversation.



Perspective taking



Some people can readily adopt the perspective of someone else. They might, for example, frequently



- imagine life from the viewpoint of someone else, as if in their head, scanning the surroundings with their eyes,
- consider how this person might be feeling in this situation
- imagine the beliefs, attitudes, or conclusions this person may reach about a specific matter.

This tendency or capacity of individuals to imagine life from the viewpoint or perspective of someone else tends to foster humility (Kotsogiannis et al., 2024).

A case study



Patrick was a CEO of a business with 100 staff. Fiercely intelligent and innovative, Patrick did not consider the perspective of his staff.

- When conveying his plan to improve performance appraisals, he did not imagine how diverse staff—such as single mothers—might interpret his words.
- Staff incorrectly assumed that he introduced this change because he believed that employees were not working hard enough,
- So, staff were cynical of his intentions and often dismissed his initiatives. Within three months, morale & productivity plummeted.

Benefits of perspective taking

People are more inclined to adopt the perspective of someone if they recognise the benefits of this practice. The following list presents some validated benefits of perspective taking.

- Which two or three of these benefits could be most helpful to you?
- Can you identify an opportunity in which you could disperse some of this information to other people at work?

Benefits that people experience if they—at least sometimes—imagine life from the perspective of someone else

Their proposals or suggestions are perceived as more creative and useful, accommodating diverse people (Grant & Berry, 2011),



Their romances and marriages are more likely to be fulfilling and satisfying (Long & Andrews, 1990),



They are more likely to be liked by the person whose perspective they are adopting (Goldstein et al., 2014),



They are more empathic (Batson et al., 1997),



They negotiate more effectively, uncovering deals that satisfy both parties (Galinsky et al., 2008),

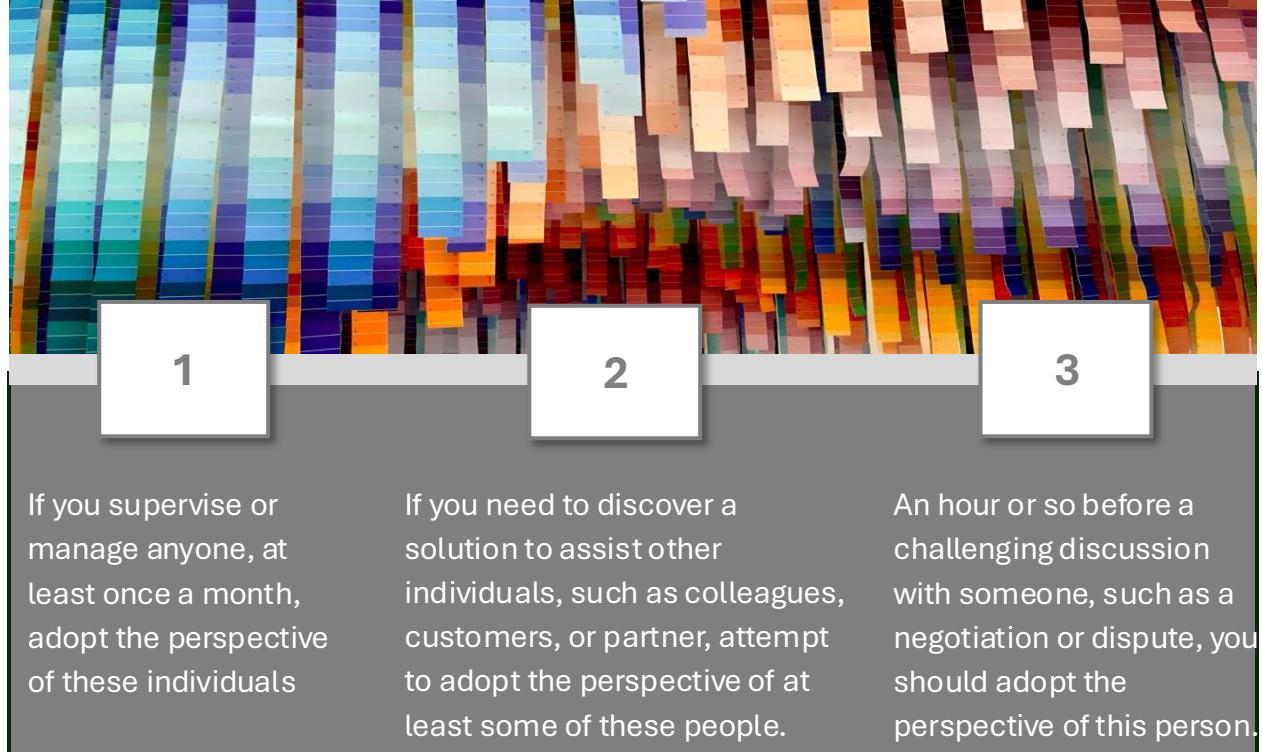


They are more confident they can resolve disagreements (Sessa, 1996),

They develop better relationships at work and thus are more likely to enjoy their job (Parmar et al., 2024).

When to adopt the perspective of other people

Few individuals can imagine the lives and adopt the perspective of everyone they meet. So, here are some principles you should apply to decide when to apply this practice



In your online diary, perhaps you could insert times in which you may need to adopt the perspective of various people over the next month or so.

How to adopt the perspective of other people

Researchers have validated many strategies that enhance the capacity of people to adopt the perspective of someone else (e.g., Goldenberg et al., 2018). Here are some examples of these strategies:

- Imagine yourself at the location this person often sits or walks. Pretend you can see the world from the eyes or viewpoint of this individual (cf., Samuel et al., 2025). Observe the surroundings for a few minutes.
- Soon afterwards, visualise this person completing a task that is relevant to you—such as reading a proposal you have written—again from the eyes or viewpoint of this individual.
- Ask yourself something like “From his or her viewpoint, what would he or she perceive as most important about this task?”
- Then, ask yourself “What thoughts might then occupy the mind of him or her, such as concerns, opinions, interpretations, and conclusions?”
- Finally, ask yourself “How would he or she feel in this moment—such as anxiety, disappointment, or confusion?”

Did you know



When organisations value the needs of staff, customers, and other stakeholders over profit, individuals are naturally more inclined to adopt the perspective of other people (Parmar et al., 2024).



Exercises to temper perfectionism

Some people set lofty standards for themselves, such as the goal to prevent all mistakes during a speech or essay. These lofty standards can boost motivation and enhance performance. However

- lofty standards, especially if unrealistic or unfeasible, often culminate in disappointment, shame, depression, and other problems.
- Indeed, unrealistic standards also seem to impede humility (e.g. Thornburg-Suresh & McElroy-Heltzel, 2024).
- That is, if people are perfectionistic, they do not want to acknowledge their flaws and limitations to other people or even to themselves.



The following list outlines practices that may curb perfectionism and perhaps foster humility. After you skim this list

- brainstorm and insert other practices that may curb perfectionism,
- if you have recently experienced perfectionism, from this list, identify three practices you might attempt in the future,
- initiate at least one practice every week,
- in each instance, observe your emotions: you may feel awkward at first but then calmer hours later.



Commit some intentional mistakes.

Example: You may deliberately insert a typo into an email, arrive later than usual, or wear mismatched socks



Set and fulfill a modest goal

Example: You could, on one day, set the goal to complete 5% fewer tasks than usual.



Replace perfectionistic thoughts with more nuanced alternatives (see Egan, 2014; Suh et al., 2019)

Example: If you ever experience the thought “If I commit a mistake, people will think I am incompetent”, instead consider a more nuanced perspective, such as “People direct less attention to my mistakes than do I, called the spotlight effect. So, they may not notice my mistakes or not change their opinion of me”.



Engage in a mindfulness exercise; mindfulness limits the extent to which perfectionism impairs humility (Thornburg-Suresh & McElroy-Heltzel, 2024)

Example: You could listen to a mindfulness video on YouTube for about 20 minutes

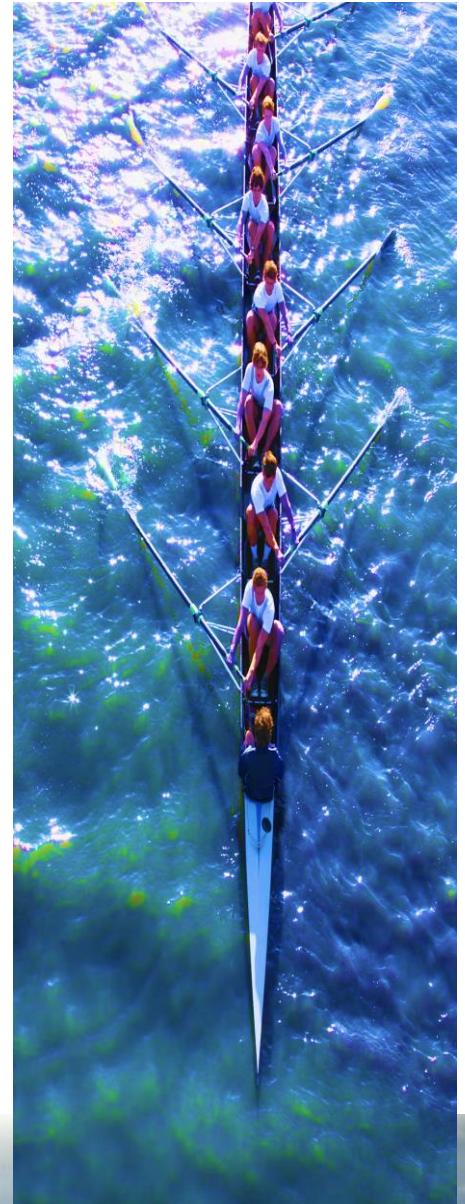
Interventions that are broader than humility: Future self-continuity

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, maybe 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:

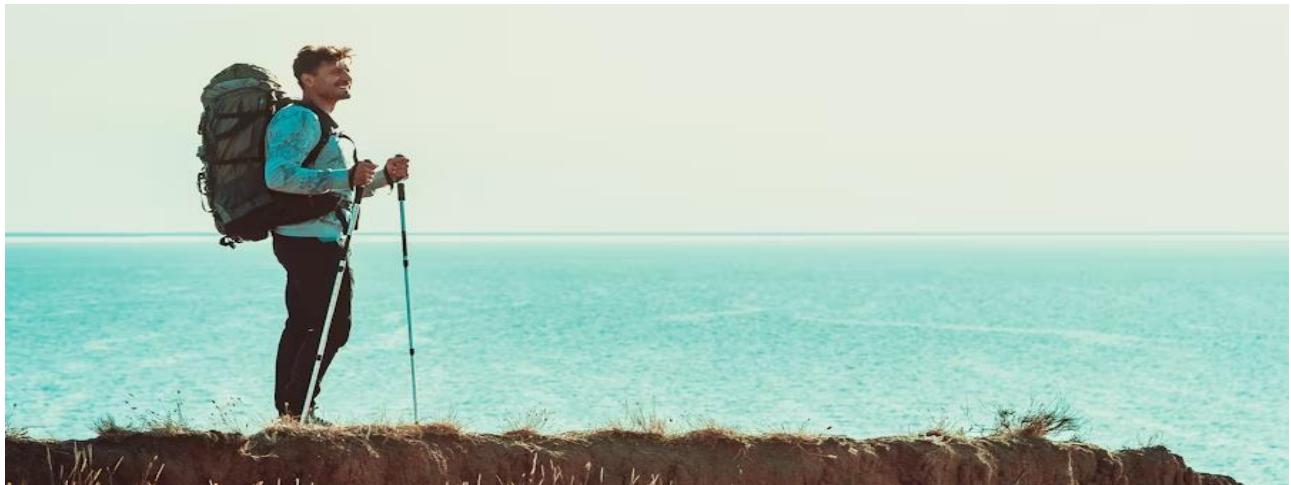
- you might accumulate some responses to emails that may be useful if you are granted these roles,
- you may even accumulate recommendations you would like to express to this future image of yourself.



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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Interventions that are broader than humility: Growth mindset

Practices that cultivate a growth mindset

Did you know



Some people believe that human intelligence, character, and many other qualities are modifiable—and can be improved after suitable guidance, practice, and effort—called a growth mindset. When people adopt this belief, they are more receptive to feedback or challenges, because they perceive these insights as opportunities to grow, and thus tend to be humble (Porter & Schumann, 2018).



Some people, however, assume that human intelligence, character, and many other qualities are fixed because these attributes primarily depend on our biology, such as our brain and genes. However



- research on neuroplasticity shows that brain circuits can change fundamentally and that specific exercises, such as mindfulness (Babiy et al., 2025), may even accelerate these changes,
- indeed, the brain is like a muscle that grows with practice,
- research on epigenetics shows that meditation and other activities can activate or deactivate some harmful genes; so, genes may not constrain us to the degree that many people often assume.

Strategies and practices that facilitate change

Often, people attempt to improve their qualities, such as their motivation or skills, unsuccessfully—and thus assume that many human qualities cannot be modified. Usually, however, these individuals are unaware of recent discoveries about the strategies and practices that facilitate and sustain these changes. To overcome this problem, read the following suggestion and identify 5 opportunities to apply this approach.

- Consider the precise circumstances in which you plan to change a behaviour, such as act more confidently. Imagine the time, location, surroundings, or even the emotions you are experiencing
- For 3 minutes, simulate this change in your behaviour. You could, for example, speak confidently in front of a mirror.
- Repeat to yourself, at least five times, something like “Whenever this circumstance arises, I will complete this action”.
- Imagine the joy and pride you might feel if you implement this change.
- Observe your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours—such as your posture or mannerisms—for a minute or so. Then, identify a few obstacles or impediments that could impede your plan. After people observe their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, they can identify the main obstacles more effectively (Kreibich et al., 2020).
- Finally, decide how you might respond to address each obstacle.
- This exercise integrates two effective techniques, called mental contrasting & implementation intentions—and enables you to change your behaviour or personality seamlessly and effortlessly.

Did you know

 When people remember times in which they were granted a sense of power or authority, they tend to think more effectively and flexibly during job interviews (Lammers et al., 2013). So, intellectual capacity is modifiable.

Did you know

 Researchers have developed many interventions that can change the personality of people significantly and sustainably (Roberts et al., 2017; Stieger et al., 2020). These interventions often entail implementation intentions.

Other practices to help you change sustainably

Below are some other strategies that help people change sustainably. Imagine how you could apply each strategy to introduce some change in your behaviour (see Michie, 2008).

Strategy	How you could apply this strategy
Ask someone to remind you about this change, initially daily, but then gradually less frequently over time	
If possible, initiate this change with someone else so you can motivate and reward one another	
Arrange items, such as reminder notes, to help you remember and maintain the change. Remove distractions	
To boost motivation, set target ranges—such as the goal to read 6 to 10 books a month rather than 8 books a month.	
Act as a role-model who could inspire other people to initiate this change; discuss the benefits of this change	
If you relapse, complete an activity that reinforces your sense of progress—such as learn a relevant skill. But be kind to yourself if you relapse; self-compassion fosters the inclination to change (e.g., Breines and Chen, 2012)	



Past circumstances that facilitated change

To identify other strategies that can help you change sustainably and thus to cultivate a growth mindset

- identify either a person you know who seems to have changed fundamentally and sustainably—or a time you changed a fundamental attribute fundamentally and sustainably,
- Identify events, practices, or other circumstances that may have enabled this person or you to change



Interventions that are broader than humility: Resilience

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).

Physical Activity continued	Illustration or justification
After some disappointment or failure, write about this event on some paper and then, literally, enclose this paper in an envelope.	For example, you might write about your actions, the consequences of this action, and the insights you gained. This exercise has been shown to alleviate unpleasant feelings and emotions (Li et al., 2010).
Watch a poignant or inspiring movie—like Slumdog Millionaire, Dead Poet's Society, the Shawshank Redemption, Forrest Gump, The Pursuit of Happiness, Gran Torino, Saving Private Ryan, Hotel Rwanda, Million Dollar Baby, 12 Years a Slave, or even Up.	While watching this film, identify some of the qualities you admired in the protagonists that you may like to develop in the future. After watching these movies, people often become more resilient and motivated to become a better person and to assist other individuals (Ott et al., 2021).
<p>At least once a week, participate in sport or exercise in which you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in sport or exercise with friends or family, • participate in sport or exercise in which you refine a skill, • participate in sport or exercise outside in which you also can choose the intensive yourself. 	<p>Sport or exercise tends to enhance wellbeing but not in all circumstances (White et al., 2024). That is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when people listen to groovy music while exercising—music in which they feel the urge to synchronise their body with the beat—they are more likely to experience positive emotions (Suwabe et al., 2021); brain regions that resist temptations are activated (Fukuie et al., 2023), • exercise or sport outside, surrounded by nature, is especially like to elicit positive emotions, such as vitality (Thompson Coon et al., 2011), • exercise that instils a sense of competence or consolidates relationships may foster satisfaction with life (Zhang et al., 2022), • exercise in which people choose the level of intensity is more likely to elicit positive emotions (e.g., Callaghan et al., 2011).





Social activities that foster resilience

Like physical activities, particular social activities can also promote resilience. For example, after reserved individuals force themselves to socialise, their mood tends to improve.

Social activity	Illustration or justification
<p>Gradually develop the capacity to improve the feelings of people who seem upset or distressed—and practice these skills. For example, you may learn how to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• normalise these emotions, expressing comments like “I think your feelings are understandable in these circumstances”,• express confidence they will feel better soon, with comments like “I do know that distress about these events tends to subside naturally over time (Kagan, 2006; Rosenzweig, 2016)—called the psychological immune system—so hopefully you will feel stronger soon”.	<p>When people attempt to improve the emotions of someone who seems upset or distressed, their own emotions tend to improve and their satisfaction with life increases (Jurkiewicz & Oveis 2024). People feel better about themselves after they assist other individuals as well as feel better about their relationships.</p>
<p>If you feel deflated or distressed, attempt to concoct a reason to converse with someone or help someone—a friend on the phone, the barista in a café, or indeed anyone.</p>	<p>When upset, some people attempt to withdraw from social interactions. Yet, as research shows (Augistine & Hemenover, 2008), a social interaction somehow overcomes unpleasant emotions in individuals, regardless of whether they are introverted</p>

Did you know



Kindness can improve resilience. People who behave generously and kindly experience greater resilience and optimism as well as limited levels of anxiety and loneliness (Cash et al., 2032; Curry et al., 2018).

Supportive people in your life

After people remember or converse with someone in their life who is always supportive rather than judgmental, they tend to experience greater humility (Itzchakov et al., 2024). Perhaps, after these memories or conversations,

- individuals feel they can be accepted and respected unconditionally,
- therefore, they do not feel they need to conceal their shortcomings,
- so, they are not as ashamed of their limitations or misconceptions, enabling intellectual humility.



To maintain your humility,



- identify someone in your life who is always supportive rather than judgmental—someone who knows and accepts you fully, despite your faults,
- skim the following list of suggestions on how you could prime your memory or awareness of this person,
- identify the five or so most practical suggestions,
- every few days, decide which of these suggestions or other practices you will apply to help you remember or converse with this person.



Suggestions

- Position a reminder of this person on your desk, such as a photo or an object they bought or like.
- Set a reminder or alert to contact this person regularly, such as once a month.
- Write a letter of gratitude to this person.
- When planning which tasks to complete during the day, consider which activities this person might prioritise
- Before you respond to an email or request, consider how this person might respond.
- Before you respond to an email or request, consider the advice this person would convey to help you respond effectively?
- Whenever you feel stressed or upset, consider how this person might boost your mood.
- Whenever you feel stressed or upset, imagine yourself outlining the events to this person.
- After a meeting or conversation, consider how they might evaluate your performance and how you could improve.
- Save a text, email, or voice message they sent you that you like.
- Maintain a log to record the supportive messages or phrases this person has communicated.



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 & 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>

Mental image	Illustration or justification
<p>Close your eyes and imagine your life in the future. Visualise a perfect life—a life in which you have worked hard and have realised all your key goals. You can also write about these images.</p>	<p>This exercise, called best possible selves, significantly improves wellbeing and resilience (for a review, see Loveday et al., 2018).</p>
<p>Read some literature, or watch a video such as this presentation, that reveals how stress can enhance resilience, development, and performance. The belief that stress is helpful magnifies these benefits (e.g., Crum et al., 2013, 2017). For example, when stressed,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people direct their attention to vital information rather than distractions, • people can maintain effort and persistence, especially if they perceive this stress as a challenge, • people gradually develop resilience • people can respond more rapidly to unexpected events. <p>After reading or watching material about this topic, attempt to remember a time in which you thrived while stressed, such as answered questions effectively during a stressful job interview. Close your eyes and imagine this situation as vividly as possible. Or imagine yourself thriving during a stressful event in the future.</p>	<p>After people learn that stress can be helpful—and then visualise a circumstance in which stress was helpful—they are more likely to adopt the belief that stress can improve wellbeing, development, and performance (Williams & Ginty, 2024). This belief enhances the capacity of people to thrive during stressful circumstances (Crum et al., 2013, 2017).</p>



To promote resilience, 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
<p>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>	<p>For example, suppose you failed to secure a job or pass an exam. You might consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• insights or lessons you learned from this experience—such as how to prevent this problem in the future,• how this event may shift and clarify your future goals,• desirable attributes you demonstrated, such as resilience despite the disappointment• desirable attributes you gained, such as empathy,• relationships you consolidated, such as the support that a friend demonstrated, <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">• 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),• 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 & Meiran, 2007).• your thoughts mainly revolve around how this event could benefit your future (Vlasenko et al., 2024).

Speak to yourself continued	Illustration or justification
<p>Whenever you experience more stress than usual, speak to yourself compassionately.</p>	<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"> • “you really have experienced a tough week”, • “everybody commits mistakes; you do not need to be upset by mistakes”. <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">• 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, & Waugh, 2014)• indeed, anticipating a positive event later was more effective than experiencing a positive event several minutes earlier.

Journal entries continued	Illustration or justification
<p>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>	<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"> • skim the following list of examples that illustrate authentic behaviours, • recall and record a time in which you felt authentic in the past—and reminisce about this moment for a few minutes, • or visualise yourself behaving more authentically in the future.



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 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">• 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).• After people choose to think or to read very rapidly, their mood improves significantly (Pronin, Jacobs, & Wegner, 2008).

Helpful plans continued	Illustration or justification
<p>Perceive feedback, failures, and similar challenges as opportunities to derive lessons you could impart to other people (Carlson & Fishbach, 2024).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set yourself the goal to identify 10 lessons from such feedback or similar challenges. • Identify opportunities in which you may be able to impart these lessons to someone else—especially to someone who has experienced some challenges.
<p>If you feel you failed to complete a task well, uncover opportunities to attempt this task again.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Write a couple of paragraphs about who you really are—your true character—in some detail</p>	<p>For example, you could write about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anything that you are passionate about, including passions you seldom express, • how you would like the world to be in 10 years or aspirations you could achieve then, • a couple of your strengths or talents that could help you achieve these aspirations, • any progress you may have forged on these aspirations. <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>



Articles or videos that promote resilience

Consider the Three Marks teaching—three principles that emanate from Buddhism. First, all life circumstances are transitory or impermanent. Second, every person is interconnected with everything else and thus cannot control their circumstances entirely. Third, unpleasant events are thus unavoidable. After people are exposed to these principles, they recover more rapidly after adverse or unpleasant events (Klein et al., 2024). To illustrate, when people experience anxiety,

- they could first remind themselves that such emotions—and the events that elicited these emotions—are impermanent and will inevitably dissipate but not necessarily in a predictable fashion,
- second, individuals could remember that all facets of their life are interconnected with everything else—and hence they cannot readily control their experiences and feelings; they do not need to feel ashamed of these emotions.
- third, they could remember these unpleasant emotions are natural and perhaps inevitable in these circumstances.



Similarly, before presenting a speech, individuals could

- remember the impermanence of this setting—the possibility, for example, they may be criticised one moment and praised the next moment,
- they could then remember that everything is interconnected and, for example, the judgments of other people depend on many idiosyncratic thoughts or memories and cannot be controlled.
- finally, they could remember that some unfavourable evaluations are inevitable; they should not strive to prevent these criticisms.

If you practice the strategies that foster resilience often, your capacity to temper unpleasant emotions improves. You develop the belief that emotions are modifiable (Smith et al., 2018). Interestingly

- this belief tends to promote wellbeing over time (Zhang et al., 2023),
- individuals who recognise that emotions are modifiable are more likely to reframe unpleasant events, rather than gravitate to alcohol or other destructive activities, to enhance their mood (Kim et al., 2024).

Interventions that are broader than humility: Meaning in life

Practices that foster meaning in life

After people experience this sense of meaning, they are more likely to exhibit humility. To illustrate, after individuals contemplate the meaningful relationship in their life, they are more receptive to information that challenges their beliefs: a hallmark of humility (Van Tongeren et al., 2014).



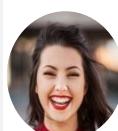
Activities to adapt and to undertake

Therefore, each week or so, individuals could undertake an activity that has been shown to foster this sense of meaning—such as activities that consolidate relationships. For evidence, see tinyurl.com/tn9vpdvs. Adapt the following examples to suit your needs.

Attempt to identify the common theme to most the problems you are experiencing in life



Develop a plan on how you could help two of the most important and significant people in your life achieve their goals.



Example: Many of my problems stem from feeling inundated with too many duties and responsibilities

Example: I could attend a training program with my father—who is otherwise reluctant to develop his skills

Further activities that reinforce a sense of meaning in life



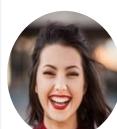
Identify a task you could complete in the next few months that might benefit society in the future, even after you die

Example: I could write a manual on some of the best ideas and initiatives this organisation has implemented



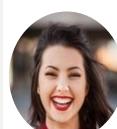
Consider how you could improve your relationships with two individuals in one of your teams or communities

Example: I could tell one of my colleagues how I admire his innovations. I could also share some information I received.



Contemplate how you can spend more time with people who are always supportive rather than judgmental

Example: Each week, I could telephone one of my three most trusted friends and listen to their concerns.



Recall an illuminating or informative conversation with a person from your past who you really liked and valued

Other considerations: I could also record the insights I learned from the people I most valued in the past



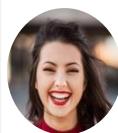
Disclose to at least two friends or relatives a problem you are experiencing



Transcribe the goals you want to achieve in the next month—and then adjust these objectives so the achievement of one goal may facilitate other goals as well



Each morning, complete three short challenging tasks—tasks that demand effort and concentration



Consider how something you value—such as a relationship or role—might not have unfolded had some other event not transpired

Other considerations: I could divulge the unpleasant emotions I am feeling because of this problem, and seek advice on how to resolve this matter

Example: I need to learn about AI and write an essay on counselling. So, perhaps I should write an essay on how AI can be useful to counsellors.

Example: On most mornings, I will read an article as rapidly as possible, complete an errand I had been avoiding, and perform 10 press-ups

Example: If I had not been retrenched, I would have never met my best friend or been promoted to team leader.

- Write about a typical day in your life 10 years from now,
- Imagine a movie about your life—such as the main scenes or narrative of this movie.

Recovery



To enhance and to entrench your humility, you may need to modify some of your practices or habits. These changes can deplete your mental energy (Zhong, Wen, et al., 2024). When your mental energy subsides, some of your capabilities, such as your capacity to respect dissenting opinions—a hallmark of humility—also decline (Tsai & Li, 2020). So, attempts to foster humility can diminish humility! To override this problem, you need to learn how to replenish this mental energy.

Activities to complete towards the end of a workday

To help replenish mental energy, towards the end of each day, complete some activities that have been shown to help people detach from work (Karabinski et al., 2021)—so, during their leisure time, worries and concerns about work do not disrupt their awareness.

- Briefly practice each of these activities now.
- If necessary, decide how you could adjust these activities, to suit your needs.



Record three positive events that happened during the day.

Example: These events could be brief and minor, such as “a colleague smiled at me today”, or more prolonged and important (Bono et al., 2013).



If possible, record a lesson or insight you learned from one or more of these events.



List the duties or goals you would have liked to fulfill, but did not achieve, today.



Then, plan **how, when, and where** you will achieve these duties or goals tomorrow (Smit, 2016). Otherwise, concerns about these unfulfilled goals may inundate you.

Example: Perhaps the colleague smiled because you expressed praise. So, you might decide to praise teammates more often in the future.

Example: Perhaps you planned to question a colleague over a decision but, for whatever reason, did not complete this task

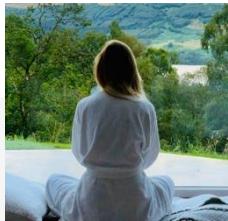
Example: Write this plan as vividly as possible, such as “I will email John at 10.00 tomorrow in my office. The email will roughly comprise these three messages. First...”.



Activities to complete during your leisure time

During your leisure time, often in the evening, some of the tasks you complete might also facilitate detachment and recovery from work.

- Briefly practice each of these activities now.
- If necessary, decide how you could adjust these activities, to suit your needs.



- For a couple of minutes, several times a week, sit in a comfortable location, close your eyes, and observe your breath.
- Notice how you slowly inhale and then slowly exhale, slowly inhale and then slowly exhale.
- If your mind wanders, gradually return your attention to your breath. This mindfulness tends to facilitate detachment from work (Michel et al., 2014).
- If you experience unwanted thoughts about work, transcribe these thoughts briefly; then, observe your breath for a minute or so.
- If these unwanted thoughts continue, close your eyes and imagine one of these thoughts is written on a cloud. Watch this cloud gradually drift away.

Activities that demand attention during leisure time

To detach and to recover from work, the most useful activities tend to

- demand concentration
- help you solve a problem at work or home
- feel relaxing or enjoyable,
- elicit a feeling of learning, growth, or mastery (Sonnenstag & Fritz, 2007)—or entail creativity or imagination (Eschleman et al., 2014).

To help you choose activities that fulfill most or all these criteria,

- skim some of the following examples of possible activities
- choose 10 or so activities you could complete in the future during your leisure time,
- If possible, complete one to five of these activities each week.

Examples of activities that facilitate recovery



- Learn a skill, even if only to a minor extent, that may be relevant to work—such as learn a few words from a language that clients speak.
- Attend a seminar, tutorial, or workgroup in which you develop helpful knowledge or a creative skill.
- Listen to an informative podcast while walking.
- Plan a small personal project, such as map a holiday route.
- Redesign your workspace to improve your wellbeing and your concentration
- Create a personal budget or identify how can save money.



Elicit physiological changes that improve sleep

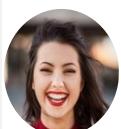
Sleep can also help people replenish their mental effort after a hard day. Physiological changes in our body and brain help us feel tired and sleepy. For example, levels of melatonin—a chemical in the brain that promotes drowsiness—increase a few hours before we sleep. The following list details some activities that initiate these changes

Comforting activities to implement



Consider a warm shower or bath about 1 to 2 hours before you sleep

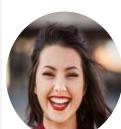
Reason: As your body cools down after the shower or bath, you are more likely to feel sleepy (Harding et al., 2019)



Check the surroundings are quiet, dark, and a comfortable temperature

Details: The pillow and bed should feel comfortable as well.

Note: Sound attenuation can improve the quality of sleep (Fietze et al., 2016)



Prevent hunger or excessive food and drink before you retire to bed.

Details. A light snack, like some fruit or cereal, and a light drink could be helpful. Excessive food can produce indigestion and disrupt sleep.

A glass of milk in particular might facilitate sleep (Komada et al., 2020)

Activities to avoid



Avoid caffeine several hours before you sleep

Details: Avoid coffee—and perhaps tea, cola, or chocolate—6 hours before you sleep. Note that some medication, such as Panadol Extra, may also contain some caffeine.



Check the surroundings are quiet, dark, and a comfortable temperature

Details: If a smoker, do not smoke within four hours of sleeping. Nicotine is a stimulant.



Avoid alcohol before you sleep if possible.

Details. Minimise the consumption of alcohol several hours before you sleep. Although alcohol might seem to relax you, metabolites of this substance also impair sleep quality.

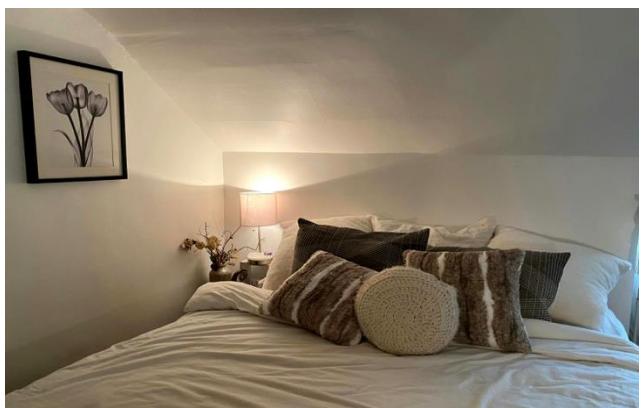


You should also

- refrain from naps after 3 pm if under 50 and healthy (Mograss et al., 2022),
- fitness tends to facilitate sleep but exercise within a few hours before bed can disrupt sleep quality (Banno et al., 2018),
- if possible, arise from bed at a similar time every morning.

To improve sleep, associate the bedroom with sleep

Some people watch TV, use their tablet, or even exercise in their bedroom. So, over time, they associate their bedroom with a place in which they feel alert rather than sleepy. So, when they enter the bedroom, they naturally feel more alert, impairing their sleep. So, how can you overcome this problem and associate the bedroom with sleep.



Exemplary practices



- **Use the bedroom for sleeping and sex only.** If possible, do not watch TV, use the computer, or complete work here.
- **If you cannot sleep well, leave the bedroom for a while and return when tired.** You may prepare a drink, listen to relaxing music, or even read something monotonous in another quiet, dim room. You might return to bed 30 minutes later.
- **Apply the same ritual for an hour or so before you retire to bed.** Each night, you might read a book in the lounge, meditate for 5 minutes, and then wash your face and so forth in the same order. But vary the routine slightly over time; otherwise, you might feel uneasy if your routine is disrupted.
- **Rotate the clock so you cannot see this clock from your bed.** If you watch the clock too often, your sleep is likely to be disrupted. You also begin to associate the clock with disrupted sleep.



To improve sleep, challenge unhelpful thoughts about sleep

People often experience thoughts that disrupt sleep. They might, for example, worry they are not sleeping enough—a thought that impedes sleep. Therefore, you need to identify and to address thoughts that could disrupt sleep. Consider these recommendations.

1



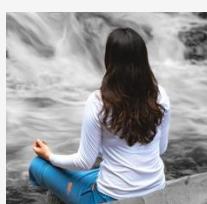
If you have not slept well, do not yield to the temptation to change your daytime activities.

2



Identify some unhelpful thoughts about sleep

3



Replace unhelpful thoughts with more nuanced alternatives.

4



Recognise that people tend to underestimate the duration in which they slept.

Examples: Some people, for instance, might cancel events if they had not slept well. This behaviour, however, can merely amplify their worries about sleep and exacerbate insomnia.

Examples: if I do not sleep well tonight, the whole day will be ruined,

If my sleep does not improve, my life is likely to deteriorate.

Examples: If I do not sleep well tonight, I might feel tired during some hours but might feel fine during the rest of the day. If my sleep does not improve, my life is likely to deteriorate.

Example: If you believe you slept only 2 hours, you probably slept closer to 4 or 5 hours.

Team humility

Did you know



When staff communicate online, they should refrain from backgrounds or other filters. During these conversations, if staff vividly, but incidentally, observe the hobbies or daily lives of each other, they perceive one another as more authentic, trustworthy, and human. Consequently, they invest more effort into these relationships (Hardin et al., 2025).

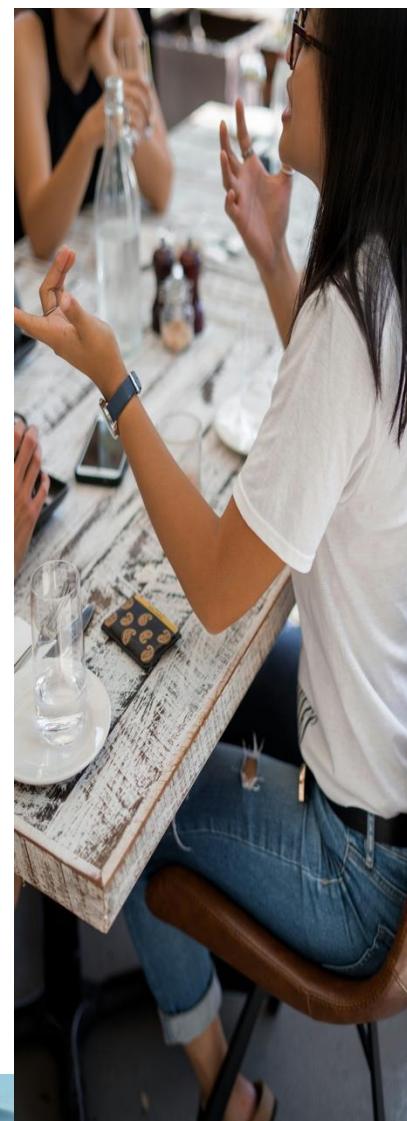
Time to enable meaningful relationships

When conversations are superficial or rushed, common in social media, people may not listen to each other carefully and respectfully, impeding humility. Indeed, according to Carr (2025), when individuals use social media or other online platforms to communicate, they are more inclined to dislike each other. That is

- in these forums, people learn many superficial details about one another,
- they become aware of differences between themselves and other individuals,
- people tend to be more attuned to differences than similarities—and these differences often provoke distrust.

Therefore,

- if possible, arrange settings in which you can converse with one or two colleagues in depth,
- in these settings, you may become more attuned to motives or interests you share rather than superficial differences.



Other measures to stem time pressure



If rushed, staff not only converse superficially but are not as inspired to learn, diminishing their humility. Specifically, whenever people feel inundated with work, they tend to become irritable. Their primary motivation, thus, is to complete their tasks as expediently as possible. They do not therefore feel as motivated to develop or to extend their knowledge, skills, and attributes (Beck & Schmidt, 2013). Consequently, they may not be as receptive to feedback or advice. So

- as a team, identify opportunities to diminish the degree to which staff feel rushed at work,
- derive these suggestions from the following table as well as personal experiences and ingenuity.

Suggestion	Evidence or benefits
<p>Organise times in which staff may complete their work uninterrupted, without disruptions. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the team might agree not to contact or disrupt one another during the morning,• obviously, the precise arrangement will need to accommodate the distinct needs and duties of each team and individual.	<p>When staff are seldom interrupted, they feel more immersed in their work. When immersed, people are not as likely to feel mentally exhausted and thus feel they dedicate more time to work. Consequently, they do not feel as rushed (Dong & Sun, 2025).</p>
<p>Arrange conversations in which staff are granted more opportunities to negotiate with their colleagues the tasks they would like to complete. During these conversations, staff might discover that one person enjoys a task that another person likes and vice versa.</p>	<p>When staff complete tasks that utilise the skills they want to develop—or are compatible with their interests—they are not as likely to feel exhausted afterwards. They do not, therefore, feel as rushed or harried (Dong & Sun, 2025).</p>

Suggestion	Evidence or benefits
<p>Organise Pomoro sessions that staff can attend. Perhaps once a week, arrange a session, lasting three hours, in which staff are collectively encouraged to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work silently for 25 minutes, • break for 5 minutes. <p>Obviously, these sessions are applicable only to staff who can complete their tasks alone.</p>	<p>These sessions have been shown to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diminish fatigue & improve mood, concentration, and motivation relative to sessions in which individuals chose the duration of their breaks, • preserve their productivity despite these benefits in mood (Biwer et al., 2023). <p>Furthermore, if staff feel they can decide when to rush and when to work at a more leisurely pace, called time control, a heavy workload is not as likely to elicit feelings of irritability (Baethge et al., 2024).</p>
<p>Staff should, if possible, attempt to check emails only three times a day. Staff who often email each other could meet once a day or so to discuss key topics instead.</p>	<p>When staff check emails only three times a day, they are generally not as likely to feel overwhelmed with work (Kushlev & Dunn, 2015).</p>
<p>If permitted or possible, staff should devote at least an hour a day to personal development—and enter this hour into their online diaries.</p>	<p>This strategy also increases the extent to which staff seem busy to other people—because their diaries are more occupied. People who seem busy are often perceived as important (Bellezza et al., 2017).</p>

Did you know



Sometimes, organisations might arrange some competition between subgroups of a larger team—such as a competition to develop some skill. During these competitions, the staff learn about the capabilities and preferences of another, enhancing their capacity to coordinate efficiently in the future (Ching et al., 2024)



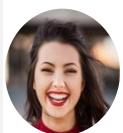
The planning fallacy

Did you know



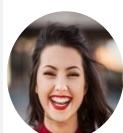
One of the reasons that people feel overwhelmed can be ascribed to the planning fallacy—the tendency of people to underestimate the duration they need to complete some task. For example, tasks that people believe they can finish in 2 weeks often demand 3 weeks. So, individuals often feel rushed

Fortunately, to prevent the planning fallacy and to diminish time pressure, researchers have uncovered a series of strategies that could be effective. Here are some strategies to adopt **when planning a task and estimating when the task will be complete**



Identify the subtasks that must be completed, but in reverse order. That is, first stipulate the last subtask that should be completed, then the second last subtask, and so forth. Attempt to outline each subtask in detail.

Reason: When people consider the subtasks in reverse order, they become more attuned to the challenges that might transpire, diminishing the planning fallacy (Wiese et al., 2016; see also Min & Arkes, 2013).



Imagine each subtask from the perspective of someone else—as if someone is watching you or your colleagues undertake all these activities.

Reason: When people imagine the task from the perspective of someone else, they feel a sense of detachment from these activities and may thus be more willing to consider obstacles (Buehler, Griffin, et al., 2012).

At the end of this project, insert a subtask that, if necessary, could be deferred. For example, the last subtask on most projects could be to review the implementation of all subtasks and identify how these subtasks could be completed more efficiently in the future.



Identify which of the subtasks have been completed before. Attempt to recall one to three obstacles or complications that individuals experienced in the past that could unfold again. Imagine the frustration that leaders may express if these problems delay the task.



Identify which one to three subtasks might demand the most effort and concentration. Record a reason why these subtasks might be challenging.



When ready to estimate the time that is needed to complete each task and subtask, first record an optimistic estimate. Then record a pessimistic estimate. Finally, consider the most likely estimate.

Reason: When people feel empowered, they often divert their attention from potential complications, amplifying the planning fallacy. Direct instructions to consider these complications overrides this tendency (Weick & Guinote, 2010).

Reason: When people orient their attention to a challenging subtask, the deadline feels closer, diminishing excessive optimism (Hadjichristidis et al., 2014; Jiga-Boy et al., 2010)

Reason: When people consider both an optimistic estimate and pessimistic estimate, they recognise these forecasts are uncertain (Bordley et al., 2019). This uncertainty may dampen their optimism and, therefore, diminish the planning fallacy.

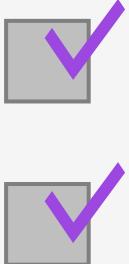


When people estimate the duration they should devote to a sequence of tasks in a project, they seldom allocate enough time to the last one to three tasks (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002). So, to decide the duration you should devote to these later tasks sequence, collect objective information, such as a pilot or trial.

The previous approach, in which individuals strive to uncover the obstacles to each subtask, is suitable when the project is scheduled to end soon, such as within a month or two. However, if the task needs to be completed later—such as in a year—this approach may need to be adjusted (see Peetz et al, 2010).



When projects are likely to be completed 6 or more months in the future, while planning these projects

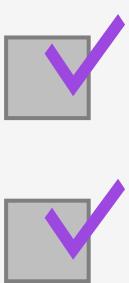


- individuals should dedicate more time to consider all the methods, and opportunities they could utilise to facilitate performance,
- in these circumstances, excessive discussion about obstacles can even magnify the planning fallacy.

If the project and timelines are developed in a team setting, people often want to seem upbeat and thus feel reluctant to underscore possible obstacles or complications.



Therefore, to offset this tendency in team settings, leaders should



- remind staff that experienced and insightful employees often recognise possible complications that other people overlook
- encourage staff to identify possible complications and challenges, both publicly and anonymously.

Did you know. Managers are more likely to underestimate the duration that a large team, rather than a small team, needs to complete tasks, called the team scaling fallacy (Staats, Milkman, & Fox, 2012). Managers often underestimate the complications that large teams experience



The Joy Express

If people can experience greater levels of joy within short periods of time, they do not feel as rushed for several reasons:

- After people experience joy or similar feelings, they can sustain effort longer and are thus more productive (Tice et al., 2007).
- People often feel the need to experience positive emotions. If they can elicit these emotions swiftly, they can fulfill this goal more rapidly & thus feel they have saved time.



As scholars have revealed (e.g., Perlow et al., 2025), people are more likely to experience significant joy within short periods if



- they diversify the activities they undertake (for one reason, see Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2012),
- they share at least a third of these activities with another person,
- these activities are not passive but demand either physical movement or concentration—such as learning a skill.

To help you achieve this goal, you could

- use the following table to identify a diversity of activities you could attempt,
- write each activity on a piece of paper,
- every few days, randomly choose one of these activities.



Suggestion	Examples
Consider how to vary your daily activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you walk, vary the time or location, so you can observe a range of views, from sunrise to stars.• When preparing or ordering meals, consider options you have never tried before.• When driving to cafes or other spots, consider suburbs you have seldom, if ever, visited before.
Consider how to vary the art—such as music or TV—you enjoy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to unfamiliar music artists or styles—perhaps with a friend.• Follow unfamiliar podcasts or even listen to categories of podcasts you have not heard before.• Watch genres of TV shows, videos, or movies that are unfamiliar to you.• Attend public lectures, concerts, theatre, galleries, festivals, markets, or other events that diverge from your usual habits
Consider the knowledge or skills you may like to develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch videos, read books, or attend classes on a skill you could acquire—such as cooking or speaking another language.
Consider diverse physical activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vary your exercise routine continually—such as the duration, location, intensity, or technique.• Try a range of skills or sports, either alone or with other people.



Egalitarian values

Some teams adopt egalitarian values, in which individuals tend to perceive everyone as equal in their underlying potential or value to society. These individuals everyone and every community has developed strengths and limitations. To illustrate, these individuals may recognise that

- young people may not have developed the knowledge or wisdom of their older counterparts—but are more attuned to recent trends and likely to improve in the future,
- some communities may not be affluent but may be more cooperative and cohesive.

Did you know



After people consider three benefits of egalitarian values, they are not as likely to feel entitled or to exhibit narcissism (Piff, 2014).

Despite this finding, some people may be concerned about the potential complications of egalitarian values. On the following page, the left column presents some of these concerns. Consider, discuss, and record arguments that counteract these concerns.

Concerns about egalitarian values



If everyone is treated as equal, when teams reach decisions, the opinions of uninformed staff may dilute the opinions of experts—impairing or delaying these decisions.



If everyone is treated as equal, individuals who work harder or more effectively may not feel their efforts are respected.



If everyone is perceived as equal, leaders may not be granted respect. If their directives are dismissed, teams are not as likely to operate well.



Attempts to perceive everyone as equal are inauthentic, because some members are perceptibly more valuable to a team than other members.

Counterarguments of these concerns

e.g., egalitarian values do not imply that expertise should be disregarded. Instead, egalitarian teams value expertise but realise that staff who might not seem experienced may still offer a unique, useful perspective.

e.g., egalitarian values do not imply that exemplary work is not rewarded. Instead, although staff who excel may receive greater income or other benefits, egalitarian teams will attempt to cultivate opportunities that enable all individuals to thrive.

e.g., egalitarian values do not imply that leaders should not be respected. Instead, egalitarian teams recognise that some people are better positioned to act as leaders—but appreciate that other roles may be of similar value.

e.g., admittedly, some people may seem more valuable to a team than other people. e.g., individuals who do not seem as valuable now may develop their capabilities, may have developed capabilities that could become more relevant later, or may have developed capabilities that are overlooked.

Despite this finding, some people may be concerned about the potential complications of egalitarian values. On the following page, the left column presents some of these concerns. Consider, discuss, and record arguments that counteract these concerns.



Examples

When teams adopt egalitarian values and perceive everyone as equal in potential, they tend to respect diverse perspectives. Accordingly, their decisions are more likely to be considered, informed, and original.

When teams adopt egalitarian values and perceive everyone as equal in potential, the staff tend to facilitate the learning and development of one another—rather than assume their peers cannot improve over time.

When teams adopt egalitarian values and perceive everyone as equal in potential, staff tend to trust, respect, understand, and assist—rather than denigrate or disregard—their peers, including people who may not be thriving. Staff thus feel supported—a state that fosters collaboration.

When teams adopt egalitarian values and perceive everyone as equal in potential, individuals are not as likely to demonstrate narcissism: a trait that can provoke conflict and irresponsible behaviour.

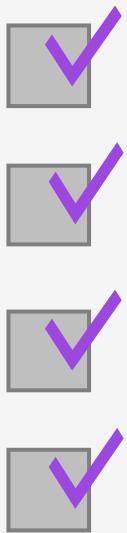
Leadership humility

How to become a humble leader

After learning about the benefits of humility, many leaders assume they can readily become humble. Indeed, at least to some degree, humility is simple to develop. For example, to demonstrate humility, leaders should utilise variations of the following phrases more often:



Phrases that epitomise humble leaders



- Can you advise me on how I can support you better—to help you achieve your goals? For evidence on the benefits of this question to customers, see Owens & Heckman (2012, 2016).
- What are some ideas you want me to pilot or trial in the future?
- What is your intuition or hunch about the key obstacles in this organisation—and how can we address these obstacles?
- I would like some people to complete these tasks...Who do you think would benefit most from this experience?
- What have we learned from these challenges?
- If you were me, how might you solve these challenges?

Although you can exhibit some humility almost immediately, leadership humility demands significant time—often weeks if not months or longer—to develop fully. The following table outlines some of the reasons that leadership humility is harder to develop than many people assume.

Why leadership humility is hard to develop	Details
<p>Some leaders may be humble in specific circumstances but not humble under more challenging circumstances.</p>	<p>Indeed, this course differentiates 10 levels of humility.</p> <p>Level 1: Can demonstrate many features of humility—such as the capacity to acknowledge personal shortcomings and biases—but only if concentrating.</p> <p>Level 2: Can demonstrate many features of humility effortlessly, but only in amenable settings.</p> <p>Level 3: Appreciates the benefits of humility and is committed to a life of humility.</p> <p>Level 4: Can integrate all features of humility with their natural tendencies, obviating the need to suppress personal inclinations.</p> <p>Level 5: Can inspire humility in other people.</p> <p>Level 6: Experiences and expresses gratitude effortlessly and authentically.</p> <p>Level 7: Perceives the future as vivid and certain rather than remote and hazy—and thus experiences humility in more stressful circumstances.</p> <p>Level 8: Can recognise and nullify personal biases—such as the tendency to overestimate personal capabilities.</p> <p>Level 9: Has developed the capacity to appreciate the observable qualities of diverse people—such as listening skills.</p> <p>Level 10: Has developed the capacity to appreciate the latent qualities of diverse people—such as strength spotting.</p>

Some leaders may be humble themselves but unable to foster this humility in their teams.	If leaders cannot foster humility in their teams, the staff are not as likely to thrive.
Leaders may not know how to maintain this humility during challenging tasks	<p>Humble leaders need to know how to maintain and foster humility during challenging tasks, such as when they need to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resolve conflicts, • influence staff, • redress concerns with performance • accommodate diverse staff, and so forth.

This workshop is designed to enable leaders to maintain and foster humility, as well as optimise performance, during challenging times.



The values of your organisation or team

5 + values

Most teams or organisations endorse a set of values—such as candour, courage, creativity, cooperation, and communication—to guide the behaviours and choices of staff. These values often appear on websites, posters, and strategic plans. Unfortunately,

- when organisations or teams endorse five or more values, staff do not tend to collaborate or operate effectively,
- these values sometimes contradict each other and therefore seem fuzzy.

3 or fewer values

In contrast, some teams or organisations endorse only one to three values. In these circumstances, especially if one of these values is **humility**,

- staff experience a shared sense of purpose—promoting collaboration and efficiency (Carton et al., 2014)
- staff are more likely to comply with all the other values that tend to coincide with humility (see Karremans, 2007).



Therefore, as a leader, you should consider the following actions:



- If your team or organisation has already endorsed a set of values, inform staff that humility can foster all these values.
- Utilise the infographic on the following page, or other information you learn today, to inform this discussion
- In the future, facilitate discussions to identify, and gradually remove, values that may be redundant.

Embrace diversity

Humble people learn from diverse people—and hence are not as likely to be biased or prejudiced (AlSheddi, 2020; Bowes et al., 2022)

Creativity and innovation

Humble people consider diverse perspectives & thus can integrate these perspectives to generate creative solutions (Zhou & Wu, 2018))

Accountable & fair

Humble people do not feel they deserve special treatment but are instead fair and accountable (Wang et al., 2025)

Adaptability & courage

Humble people are especially willing to embrace change, feedback, and technology (Lehmann et al., 2023; Li, 2023)

Teamwork & empathy

Humble people respect and listen to other people, promoting understanding and teamwork (Lehmann et al., 2025)

Learning

Humble people tend to be curious and embrace opportunities to learn and develop (Porter et al., 2020)

How to communicate changes effectively

To introduce strategies, initiatives, and practices that improve the organisation or foster humility, you need to be able to communicate these changes persuasively. To achieve this goal, identify which of the following insights you could apply.



To communicate this change, articulate some of this plan yourself but arrange other staff to articulate the remainder.

Justification: Some leaders can reconcile paradoxical or conflicting needs effectively, such as the need to assume rather than shirk responsibility as well as the need to share credit with other staff. These paradoxical leaders tend to enhance the cohesion and performance of teams (Zhang et al., 2024).

Collaborations



When conveying a change, deliberately obscure a few details initially and then reveal these details afterwards. Perhaps present an acronym first—or some letters in a hazy font—before revealing these key words.

Justification: If you obscure and then reveal some information, listeners experience a sense of curiosity. When people experience this curiosity, their scepticism tends to subside (Hüttl-Maack et al., 2024). They associate curiosity with activities that feel inherently significant and valuable.

Words and details

How to communicate changes effectively continued

To introduce strategies, initiatives, and practices that improve the organisation or foster humility, you need to be able to communicate these changes persuasively. To achieve this goal, identify which of the following insights you could apply.



Refer to failed attempts to implement similar changes in the last. Then clarify how your plan diverges from these attempts, such as “One team failed. But we can achieve this goal—because we are using a more advanced LLM”.



When communicating a change, refer to a personal narrative, tale, or story that

- exhibits some vulnerability, such as problem that you or your family experienced,
- explains why this vision is important to you and helpful to other people.

Justification: After leaders refer to workgroups who failed to achieve similar plans, staff often feel inspired to embrace this challenge. They feel the need to mobilise additional effort to this pursuit (Jeworrek et al. 2021), enhancing motivation and performance.

Acknowledge limitations

How to communicate changes effectively continued

When communicating a change, imply the life and experience of staff will improve gradually and iteratively, rather than abruptly and suddenly, over time—as the change evolves from both feedback and consultation



Did you know

 The belief that life will improve greatly often coincides with the inclination of individuals to fantasise about the future rather than address existing obstacles. So, when people feel their satisfaction with life will improve greatly rather than just modestly in the future, they tend to feel ill more often and also perceive their social networks as inadequate (Busseri et al., 2008).

Did you know

 If leaders change the organisation too dramatically, staff cannot as readily withstand other unforeseen demands, impairing performance. This observation may explain why rate of growth or profit often decline a couple of years after a CEO is replaced (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004).

How leaders should deliver feedback

If leaders or boards need to intervene and to deliver feedback, they need to recognise that many individuals—even veteran executives—may become defensive. Defensive reactions not only demonstrate a limitation in humility but can also diminish this humility in observers. Therefore, leaders, such as chairs, deputy chairs, CEOs, or indeed any manager and supervisor, need to know how to express feedback sensitively.

Did you know



Contrary to common opinion, the notion that people should insert a criticism between two complements has been refuted (e.g., Brown et al, 2002). This strategy generates a defensive response, especially from people whose self-esteem is somewhat fragile or unstable.



The following table outlines a sequence of practices you should apply or consider instead. To develop this skill,



- identify a person at work to whom you would like to deliver some unfavourable feedback,
- practice expressing this feedback—but not to this person but instead to a participant of this program,
- apply the practices that appear in the following table,
- decide how you might amend these practices in the future—and record these amendments in the table



Practice	Example	Amendments
Indicate you want to discuss a matter, but express your confidence this problem can be addressed readily	I did want to discuss a matter that I am confident we can readily address.	
Confine your comments to specific examples rather than broad concerns.	Sometimes, I sense or feel you might be able to analyse the data rather than merely enter the data.	
When you raise your concern, express this matter as either a question or intuition rather than imply your evaluation is definite and correct.	That is, I wonder if you could attempt a broader range of tasks?	
Comments that seem too definitive or broad often provoke a defensive response, called psychological reactance.		
Indicate that one of the strengths or talents of the person could explain a shortcoming or concern you want to discuss	Because you are so thorough and the quality of your work is so high, you might not be as willing to attempt unfamiliar methods or tasks. But this reluctance could diminish your capacity to adapt to unanticipated challenges.	



Practice	Example	Amendments
<p>Relate the concern you want to discuss to the future instead of the past.</p> <p>Staff tend to be harsher on themselves when they contemplate future, rather than past, transgressions because only the future is malleable (Sjåstad & Baumeister, 2019).</p>	<p>I feel this reluctance to adapt has not been a problem in the past—and has helped you thrive.</p> <p>But, because the workplace is changing rapidly, I feel the capacity to adapt may be more important in the future.</p>	
<p>Offer choice when delivering feedback.</p> <p>When individuals are granted the opportunity to choose, called autonomy support, they do not respond as defensively.</p>	<p>If you were going to attempt a broader range of tasks, which activities would you choose?</p>	
<p>Suggest a few specific and simple actions the staff member could initiate to address this shortcoming. Choose actions that may instill in staff a sense of momentum.</p>	<p>Perhaps you could read this manual.</p>	



Conflict resolution

Introduction

Besides delivering unfavourable feedback, leaders and boards may also need to manage other challenging settings and conversations. For example, they often need to resolve conflicts. To illustrate

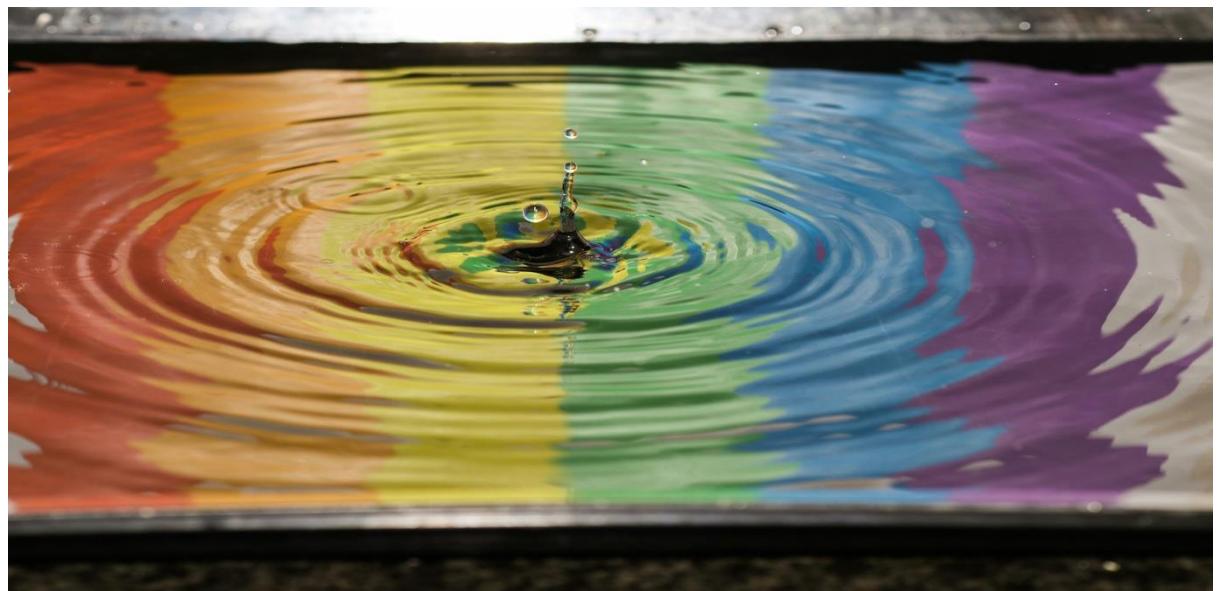
- leaders may need to address a disagreement between themselves and other colleagues or directors
- or they may need to reconcile a conflict between two other individuals.

How to resolve disputes respectfully

Unless people demonstrate some humility, conflicts tend to endure. Yet, conflicts often preclude rather than foster this humility.

The following table outlines a sequence of practices you can apply to resolve conflicts effectively and to foster humility at the same time. To develop this skill

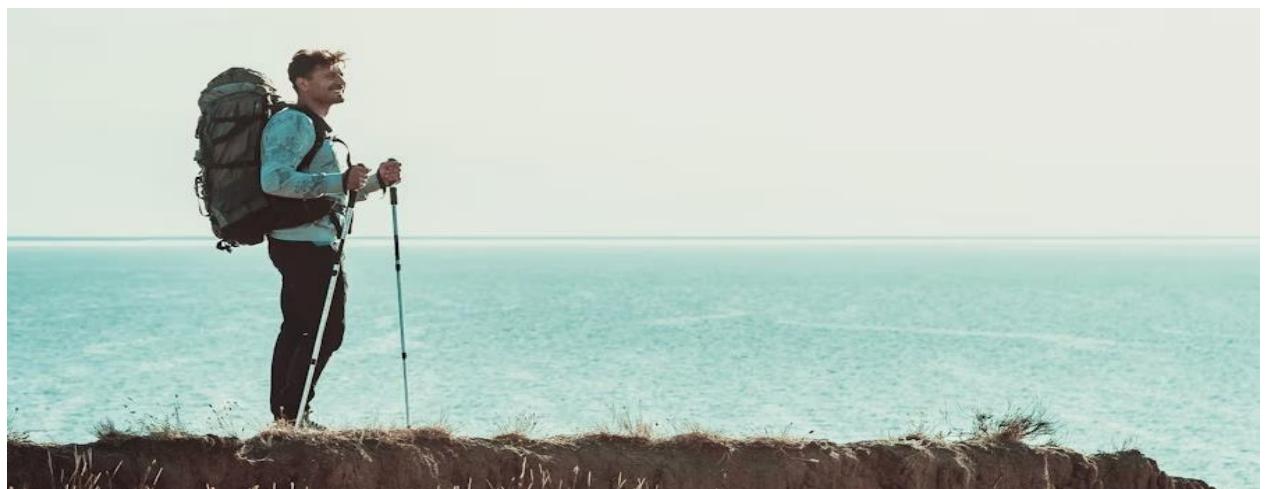
- identify a minor, trivial, or even contrived difference of opinion with another participant,
- with this person, apply the practices in turn, customised to your conflict,
- then, identify a slightly more significant difference of opinion or conflict and apply the practices again,
- in the future, gradually apply this approach to more vital conflicts.



Action	Illustration
Set up a meeting, preferably in person, to initiate this discussion. Individuals tend to develop better rapport and trust in person.	
Clarify your feelings and beliefs	
Allude to the emotions you have experienced since this matter transpired. After individuals are informed of the emotions that someone else is feeling, especially the emotions that only humans experience, they are more likely to feel empathy to this person (Vaes et al., 2002).	“Thanks for meeting me about this matter. I have felt a bit disconcerted as well as regretful about this issue”.
Outline the differences of opinion as fairly as possible	“From what I understand, I believe we need to purchase this equipment to improve efficiency, whereas you believe this equipment is not worth the cost”.
Indicate this matter is not easy to resolve—because the options vary on many interrelated attributes and these attributes are hard to measure and prioritise. If individuals appreciate they might need to depend, at least partly, on their intuition, they might become more flexible; otherwise, they may choose options that are easier to justify but not necessarily superior (Wilson & Schooler, 1991).	“I am aware, of course, that I cannot definitively verify that my option is better than your option—or vice versa. After all, the benefits and drawbacks of this equipment are hard to articulate, measure, or weigh. So, rather than a numerical answer, we will need to trust our intuition and experience to some extent”.
Indicate that you may not be able to resolve the matter today but may need more time to contemplate.	

Action	Illustration
<p>Listen to one another</p>	
<p>To commence the discussion, each person, in turn, should outline the benefits of their position as well as at least one drawback of this position—to demonstrate impartiality. Do not interrupt, if possible</p> <p>If you show you are listening genuinely, the other person is more inclined to recognise the complexities of this matter, eradicating any resentment or anger they may feel. Unfortunately, many people instead feel the inclination to challenge a person who is angry—a tendency that often amplifies this emotion (Itzchakov et al., 2017).</p>	<p>“Perhaps each of us should listen to the other person in turn. Maybe each person can discuss three benefits of their position and, to show they are impartial, acknowledge at least one drawback of their position. For example, I can discuss three reasons to purchase the equipment as well as at least one complication”.</p>
<p>Each person, in turn, should share their worries or concerns about the position the other individual proposed—and clarify why this matter feels so important.</p> <p>After people consider why a matter feels so important, their resentment tends to diminish (Huynh et al., 2016).</p>	<p>“So, I think now each of us should articulate what really bothers us about the other alternative. For example, you could discuss what are your main worries if we purchase this equipment”.</p>
<p>Each person should then identify up to three arguments they feel have not been raised yet.</p>	<p>“Perhaps now we should articulate other three or so arguments that could be relevant to this decision but have not been raised”.</p>
<p>One person should attempt to summarise the key arguments thus far.</p> <p>When individuals recognise the differences in priorities between themselves and another person, they are more likely to adopt the perspective of this individual (Todd et al., 2010), potentially increasing the likelihood of resolution.</p>	

Action	Illustration
Arrange another meeting	
<p>Unless one person is willing to concede immediately, the matter should then be deferred to another meeting.</p> <p>If individuals defer their decision, the delay sometimes increases the likelihood these individuals will uncover insights that integrate more considerations (e.g., Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006)</p>	
<p>The second meeting should perhaps be conducted online. A sense of distance tends to orient individuals towards underlying concepts rather than specific details, often enabling individuals to recognise shared opinions (Sanna et al, 2009).</p>	
<p>The aim of this meeting is to uncover a course of action that integrates the conflicting options or grants the individuals an opportunity to test or pilot one of the options.</p>	<p>“I feel our goal now should be to consider whether we can uncover a solution that reconciles our conflicting needs—or enables one of us to test our preference. For example, could we purchase the equipment for 2 months only and test whether this equipment is worthwhile”.</p>



How to resolve anger or resentment effectively

The previous sequence of practices may help you resolve disagreements. Nevertheless, if the parties feel anger or resentment to one another, this approach is unlikely to be effective. Therefore, leaders and directors need to be aware of other strategies to dampen resentment—such as resentment between team members. The following table outlines some practices that could achieve this goal. To learn these practices,



- identify a person to whom you have felt some resentment,
- apply the practices in this table to yourself.

Action	Illustration
<p>Individuals who experience resentment should be prompted to transcribe, in private, unpleasant thoughts they feel about the other person. They should replace these thoughts with more specific, nuanced, & generous alternatives.</p> <p>This approach, called reappraisal, has been shown to temper and even override conflict and resentment (Thiel et al., 2019).</p>	<p>“One strategy I learned about that tempers resentment is to replace horrible thoughts about someone with more specific, nuanced, and generous thoughts. For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rather than assume ‘this person is arrogant, you can say to yourself, “this person can be very defensive when criticised”,• this alternative thought is specific about the disliked behaviour--such as defensive instead of arrogant—and is more explicit about when this behaviour is observed...”
<p>Individuals who experience resentment should be prompted to imagine a conversation about this conflict in five years.</p>	<p>“So, imagine we meet in five years. What do you think we would say about how we managed this matter?”</p> <p>After people imagine vivid images of a future conversation, they experience less resentment but instead a more caring and responsible mindset (Huynh et al., 2016; Schacter et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2017).</p>

Decision making

Limitations to multiple-criteria decision making

To reach decisions, individuals utilise a variety of tools and techniques. One of the most sophisticated approaches is called multiple-criteria decision making. To illustrate this approach, suppose you need to decide which job applicant to select. The following table presents some numerical information about each applicant.

Name	Years of work in this industry	Years of uni study in this industry	Score on psych tests	Score from referees out of 10
Adam	5	3	105	6
Betty	4	4	92	8
Carl	12	0	103	7
Donna	4	3	112	9
Ernie	8	2	89	5



To apply a simple variant of multiple-criteria decision making, you could

- standardise the scores—so the values range from 0 to 1, perhaps by dividing each value by the maximum score,
- identify the weight or importance of each attribute, in which the weights sum to one,
- to calculate an overall preference score for each applicant, multiply each value by the weight and then sum.

The following table illustrates this approach. In this instance, Carl generates the highest preference score and would be chosen.

Name	Years of work in this industry	Years of study in this industry	Score on psych tests	Score from referees	Preference score
Weight	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.1	
Adam	0.42	0.75	0.94	0.67	0.61
Betty	0.33	1.00	0.82	0.89	0.62
Carl	1.00	0.00	0.92	0.78	0.76
Donna	0.33	0.75	1.00	1.00	0.62



A blend of deliberation and intuition

Scholars and practitioners have introduced many advances to optimise this approach. For example, they have developed techniques to choose suitable weights. Nevertheless, this approach—and indeed most quantitative approaches—are not useful in a variety of circumstances. The following table outlines these circumstances.

Circumstances in which formal decision making is not useful	Examples
The options differ on characteristics that are not quantifiable.	The degree to which an applicant seems to fit the culture is hard to quantify.
The options differ on too many characteristics to delineate.	So many other attributes differentiate the applicants, such as their confidence and so forth.
The implications of these characteristics are very uncertain	Whether you should choose confident applicants is uncertain—because confident applicants might be competent or arrogant.
The various implications of each characteristic depend on other characteristics	Whether you should choose confident applicants might depend on the experience of these individuals.



Instead, another approach, that blends deliberation and intuition, is particularly effective when

- the options, such as applicants, differ on many interrelated characteristics in which the implications are hard to quantify or predict,
- you have needed to reach many similar decisions in the past—and thus can utilise your experience.

The following table outlines this approach. Attempt to apply this approach to a decision you may need to reach soon.

Step	Example
1 Obviously collect and read information about the relevant options.	If deciding which applicant to choose, read the application and social media profile of each individual.
2 Although optional, you could complete a rough variant of multiple criteria decision making	If deciding which applicant to choose, you could roughly rate the applicants on five or so measures—such as experience, fit, and so forth—on a scale of 1 to 10. You could then weight and sum these ratings. However, you would need to recognise these sums do not encompass all the key attributes of these individuals and, therefore, do not accurately identify the best option.
3 As vividly as possible, imagine each of the most likely alternatives in sequence.	For a minute or so, you could first imagine a typical meeting with the first applicant. You could next imagine a typical meeting with the second applicant and so forth.
4 Defer your decision for at least a day if possible.	While you defer this decision, distract yourself with other activities. That is, if possible, during this time, refrain from contemplating this decision.



Step	Example
<p>5 In a familiar setting, imagine a circumstance in the future in which you feel empowered and confident. While you maintain this image for several minutes, touch your chest.</p>	<p>You might imagine yourself in a position of power, but in a role that is not too stressful. Your intuition is likely to be accurate if the setting or circumstance seems familiar to you. So, perhaps complete this activity in a location that feels cosy—perhaps in a quiet corner of your bedroom, with your favourite blanket and soothing music in the background.</p>
<p>6 Close your eyes and visualise the alternatives—such as the five applicants—as vividly as possible, one more time.</p> <p>Then, imagine the impact of these alternatives several years from now. For example, you might imagine one applicant, working at the organisation, three years now. You might imagine some changes this applicant has introduced and the impact of these changes.</p>	<p>After people consider the future impact of the various alternatives, they can more readily predict which options are likely to be effective in the future (Berg, 2019). Otherwise, some people are biased towards the option that generates immediate, but not future, benefits.</p>
<p>7 Finally, you may experience a strong hunch or intuition about which option seems more suitable. Trust this hunch or intuition.</p>	<p>If you do not experience a strong hunch or intuition, roll some dice to determine which option to choose.</p> <p>When you roll the dice, you might experience a strong hunch as to which option you prefer. Choose this option.</p>



Although this literature is contentious and complicated (see Newell et al., 2008), many strands of evidence indicate that hunches and intuitions often culminate in astute decisions or choices, at least in particular circumstances (e.g., Dijksterhuis & van Olden, 2006; Fetterman & Robinson, 2013; Remmers et al., 2024). The following table outlines some of this literature.

When intuition is helpful

When individuals feel empowered and calm, reliance on intuition tends to be more helpful (Sharpley et al., 2014; see also de Vries et al., 2009).

Leaders who tend to trust their intuition tend to enhance the performance of their teams—but only if they feel they need to consider extensive data and information to reach decisions (Sleesman et al., 2024). This intuition is especially beneficial when leaders are introverted.

Practices that enhance the benefits of intuition

Intuition tends to be especially likely to improve decisions if preceded by careful, methodical deliberation (Nordgren, Bos, et al., 2011).

Intuition seems especially beneficial after a delay (Shin & Grant, 2020).

Vivid images tend to activate intuition (Lee et al., 2009), and closing your eyes increases the degree to which images seem vivid (Nash et al., 2015). Interestingly, when individuals point towards their heart, they tend to be more sensitive to their intuition (Fetterman, 2013).

Other benefits of intuition

After people trust their intuition and reach a decision, this choice tends to feel natural and easy, improving their mood (Remmers et al., 2024).

Contemplate biases

Although your intuitions may be accurate when you feel calm, people who depend on their intuitions can be susceptible to various biases or errors. So, before you trust on intuition, you should

- read about some or many of these biases,
- consider whether these biases could affect your decisions.

Over time, your intuition may adjust to accommodate these biases. The following table outlines a sample of biases you may consider. Consider how these biases might affect the decision you need to reach.

Bias	Example
People tend to underestimate the duration that is needed to complete a task (Kruger & Evans, 2004).	When deciding between two or more alternative plans, assume the plans will demand about 20% more time than anticipated.
People tend to overestimate their capacity to shape or control an outcome (Gino et al., 2011)	When deciding between two or more alternative plans, assume you may not be able to shape or affect the outcomes or circumstances to the degree you hope.
People overestimate the degree to which other individuals are likely to agree with their position (Marks & Miller, 1987).	When deciding between two or more alternative plans, assume that you will receive more resistance or disagreement than anticipated.
People tend to underestimate the value of delayed benefits—and instead choose options that attract more immediate benefits (Soman et al., 2005)	When deciding between two or more alternatives, imagine the future benefits as vividly as possible—diminishing the likelihood you discount these benefits.



Shared decision making

The blend of deliberation and intuition enhances the decisions of individuals in many circumstances. However, even if all leaders and directors apply this approach, they may not arrive at the same decision. So, teams and boards often need to reconcile conflicting decisions. To achieve this goal, leaders and directors often incorrectly assume that

- if a team considers a decision carefully enough, the consequences of this decision will always be favourable,
- when debating a decision, the most experienced or accomplished individuals should speak first,
- conflict always impairs team performance.



Interestingly, all these assumptions—and many other beliefs about how to reach decisions—have largely been refuted. Instead, teams tend to be more effective when they apply the principles in the following tables.



Assumptions



Assume that whatever action the board chooses will generate some unforeseen complications—and introduce some measures in advance to manage these complications.



Because complications are inevitable, test these actions as soon as possible rather than seek consensus.



Indeed, embrace actions in which the consequences are most uncertain—because these choices are likely to enhance learning or, if successful, are likely to be the most profitable.



Practices



To diminish conformity, occasionally ask staff to anonymously present their position on these actions before each debate; use generative AI to summarise these positions.

For every debate around these decisions, assign one person the role to investigate likely problems or complications; rotate this role after each decision.

If the matter as important—and each member has acquired distinct knowledge about this matter—these debates should be convened in person, rather than online, whenever possible. In person, individuals can interpret the mannerisms and thus comments of another more accurately, improving discussions and decisions (Javalag et al., 2024).

Identify the % of members who should agree before an action is initiated; for example, perhaps 75% should agree if the action consumes significant resources and 50% should agree otherwise,



Boards

The hubris of executives

As many studies have revealed, when executives, especially CEOs, exhibit hubris, a range of problems in the organisation are more likely to unfold.

- How would you define hubris?
- Which of the following words do you feel are most related to hubris?

conceited overrated
narcissistic powerful
overconfident toxic

A useful definition of hubris



Hubris is the tendency of executives, to exhibit unwarranted overconfidence in their capability to achieve some outcome (Owen & Davidson, 2009; Roll, 1986). This hubris is more likely whenever

- executives have been granted positions of power for an extended duration, often with limited accountability
- these executives have generally been successful in the past.

Did you know



Despite some overlap, hubris is distinct from narcissism. For example,

- unlike narcissism, hubris is not a personality trait and, therefore, will not persist after the executives relinquish their positions of power,
- unlike narcissism, hubris does not emanate from the need to be important but are tendencies people exhibit when they experience a sense of power.

Consequences of hubris

Some research suggests that, in specific circumstances, hubris can benefit the organisation, such as foster innovation. But usually, when executives, especially the CEO, demonstrates hubris and overconfidence, many problems are likely to unfold.

- Attempt to guess these problems.
- Compare your answers to the problems that past research has uncovered.



When the CEO demonstrates hubris



- the executives are more likely to overlook trends and opportunities in the industry; the strategy and priorities of the organisation may thus be obsolete (Li & Sullivan, 2022),
- conversely, the organisation is more likely to invest in risky ventures (e.g., Li & Tang, 2010), such as untested technology
- the organisation is more likely to initiate socially irresponsible behaviours (Tang et al., 2015) as well as misconduct, such as financial misreporting (Cormier et al., 2016),
- at the organisation, the operations as well as the research and development tends to be less efficient (Lin & Lin, 2025),
- because of these reasons, financial performance tends to deteriorate (Park et al., 2018).



When should boards be concerned about hubris?

The following two lists outline the circumstances in which hubris is especially likely and consequential (see Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Li & Tang, 2010; Park et al., 2018).

- Indicate which items on each list are true of your circumstances.
- You should be very concerned about hubris if at least two items on each list are true of your circumstances—circumstances in which CEOs are not as accountable.



List 1: Circumstances that elicit feelings of power



List 2: Circumstances that grant executives more discretion

- The CEO has occupied the position for 2+ years—or has been CEO at other organisations for 5+years.
- All the executives have occupied similar positions for over two years
- Sales, market share, and other measures of performance have steadily and significantly improved during the tenure of this CEO.

- The revenue in this industry has increased significantly and steadily over the past five years.
- The level of competition in this industry is strong; other rival organisations enter the market often
- The level of tangible resources and intangible resources, such as patents, has significantly increased over the past five years.
- The organisation is nimble and has changed appreciably in recent years.



How to manage hubris

If you are concerned about hubris, the board needs to govern and monitor the CEO and executives more closely than usual. For example,

- when the CEO submits a significant proposal, a team of staff and board members should be tasked with the goal to identify all potential complications,
- rather than present one proposal, the CEO must also submit at least one genuine alternative—as well as the benefits and drawbacks of each option,
- every six months, the board should compare previous forecasts with actual outcomes as well as organise listening tours of management, staff, and customers,
- at least 80% of the board members should not be staff members of the organisation,
- the board should check that all executives feel entitled to challenge each other.

What other strategies do you feel could improve governance?

-
-

Helpful discussions: The prospect of a co-CEO.

Many organisations, such as Atlassian, Netflix, Oracle, and WeWork, have appointed co-CEOs: two individuals who share the role of CEO. Typically, the individuals jointly discuss all key decisions but often fulfill distinct responsibilities, such as products and communications versus technology and operations.



Did you know



If companies appoint two co-CEOs rather than one CEO, on average, their performance on the stock market is more likely to improve—especially when the market or organisation is growing (Shin & Less, 2022).



At the appropriate time, such as during a challenging time or after a CEO leaves, boards should discuss this possibility of this arrangement because



- discussion may compel members to challenge their assumptions, promoting board humility,
- arrangement of co-CEOs can improve performance in particular settings,
- arrangement of co-CEOs implies the skills of executives are limited, role modelling humility,
- when CEOs share the role, they need to challenge one another, fostering their humility.

Topic of discussion

Board members should discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the co-CEO arrangement to this organisation. The following table outlines some of potential benefits and drawbacks as well as circumstances that influence whether this arrangement is likely to be effective.

Potential benefits of two CEOs sharing the role

- The leaders can utilise complementary strengths and capabilities, promoting innovation and improving decisions.
- The organisation is not as vulnerable if one CEO cannot work or leaves
- The two leaders can travel to more locations in a limited time

Potential drawbacks of two CEOs sharing the role

- Staff are not always sure who to contact.
- The two CEOs may contradict or conflict with one another—communicating divergent messages, cultivating distinct factions, or deferring decisions.
- The benefits might not outweigh the increased salary and oncosts of two CEOs.





Circumstances that amplify the benefits and diminish the drawbacks of this arrangement

- Although the two individuals discuss key decisions, each CEO is assigned a distinct role, so they know who is granted authority on these decisions.
- If one CEO is marginally, but not appreciably, more experienced than is the other CEO, earning about 5% more, the company is more likely to be innovative (e.g., Matozza & D'Amico, 2020).
- The two CEOs are humble or, for other reasons, able to establish a respectful, trusting relationship.
- The CEOs embrace compatible values—but observe unambiguous guidelines on how to resolve disputes promptly.
- The organisation is sufficiently large and multifaceted.

Radical humility coaching

Introduction to humility coaching

If you are a consultant or leader, you might need to coach or mentor other individuals, hereafter called clients. To be successful in this role, you should help this client foster humility in their team and in themselves. These materials demonstrate how you can adapt the coaching or mentoring approaches you already use to fulfil this goal. That is

- the boxes on the left stipulate a sequence of common activities that coaches or mentors undertake, roughly in order,
- alongside each box is the relevant section of this handbook you could use, as well as a couple of examples, to adapt these activities effectively.

Establish rapport & goals



Establish rapport and trust with the client

- Model humility but with confidence, such as “I am 80% sure that coaching will be effective”.
- Share anecdotes of a personal shortcoming you gradually overcame with time and effort.
- This behaviour promotes humility and primes the belief that people can change fundamentally



Define the purpose, scope, & boundaries of coaching

- Imply that coaching will gradually and iteratively, rather than abruptly or suddenly, solve problems. This belief promotes satisfaction and persistence



Delineate your approach to coaching

- Imply that your main role is to help the client foster humility in staff—a quality that improves their resilience, relationships, and reputation.
- To deride narcissism, share examples of narcissists who depict themselves as victims, saints, or heroes and reject all feedback.
- Display the list of references in radical-humility.com that had informed this approach, partly to elicit a sense of awe.



Specify initial problems
the client wants to solve
and the goals to achieve



Collate relevant data
to clarify these
problems and goals

- Prompt clients to seek advice from their staff about matters they should attempt to solve during coaching
- Then ask clients to imagine the world from the perspective of their staff. What are their priorities?
- Prioritise the perspectives of inexperienced staff to cultivate a more egalitarian culture. This culture tends to diminish narcissism and entitlement.



Inspire clients to reflect
upon their behaviour openly

- **Relevant section:** Stability and continuity.
- Whenever clients exhibit any humility, such as concedes a mistake, indicate that you believe their willingness to recognise their limits and respect other perspectives shows they will thrive as a leader.



Finalise problems to solve
and goals to achieve

- Encourage the client to set the goal to learn at least one lesson a month from a failure—and record this lesson. Failures thus feel like opportunities.

Explore possible changes



Inspire motivation and enthusiasm in the client to change

- **Relevant section:** Recovery—primarily to prevent burnout, improve sleep, and energise the client
- **Relevant section:** Resilience and meaning
- Teach clients to replace perfectionistic thoughts with more nuanced alternatives
- Describe a person who changed greatly over time—and how the support of one leader transformed this person



Address beliefs in the client that may stifle change, such as doubts about whether people can change

- **Relevant section:** Implementation intentions—to show clients how they can enhance their qualities, as well as foster attributes in their staff, sustainably.



Explore common solutions to solve common problems

- **Relevant section:** Other measures to stem time pressure—because time pressure diminishes humility and impedes most solutions.
- For example, suggest that clients organise times in which their staff may complete their work uninterrupted, without disruptions—an arrangement that often decreases time pressure.



Choose appropriate solutions to solve the key problems and achieve the relevant goals

- **Relevant section:** Decision making
- Invite clients to trust their intuition, but only after deliberating, deferring the decision and relaxing.

Implement changes



Establish the support from other people, such as staff that may needed to implement change

- **Relevant section:** Conflict resolution
- **Relevant section:** Strength spotting—to enable clients to highlight the talents of other people effectively and establish trusting relationships
- Inspire the client to show gratitude, express praise, or offer assistance to key stakeholders now, partly to influence their behaviour later. These behaviours also foster humility.



Develop credibility with these staff

- **Relevant section:** Receptivity to opposing beliefs
- Reveal that humble people—people who respect diverging opinions—are perceived as more trustworthy and credible (e.g., Yeomans et al., 2020). So, exhibit humility over time.



Help the client influence other people

- **Relevant section:** How to communicate change
- **Relevant section:** Confident communication
- **Relevant section:** How leaders should deliver feedback
- Invite clients to concede one drawback of their suggestions (Xu & Petty, 2022, 2024).
- Encourage clients to express uncertainty confidently, like “We can increase sales by 2% to 10%.



Evaluate the solutions & solidify the changes

Return to
collate relevant data
to clarify these
problems and goals

Confident communication

Confident communication

The importance of confidence when promoting humility: Vocal cues

If you want to promote humility in your teams or organisation, you need to appear confident, albeit humble. As research has revealed, people who acknowledge their uncertainty, but with confidence, are more persuasive: They are more able to inspire other individuals to change (Gaertig & Simmons, 2018). To seem confident, while acknowledging uncertainty and demonstrating humility,

- skim these helpful strategies,
- each week or so, choose one strategy to practice.

To seem confident, vary your **pitch** as you speak (e.g., Oksenberg et al., 1986). In general, lower, rather than raise, your pitch as you end a sentence (Guyer et al., 2019).



How to practice: When alone, practice an exaggerated variant, in which you read a sentence, commencing very high and then gradually lowering the pitch.

To seem more credible, vary your **volume**, often speaking louder than usual, but occasionally soft to accentuate an important argument (Van Zant & Berger, 2020).



Caveat: This tendency to lower your voice, especially to accentuate an argument, is more useful when you are perceived as an expert or leader (see Klofstad et al., 2012, 2015).

Vocal characteristics: pitch and volume

To seem intelligent (Guyer et al., 2019; Smith & Shaffer, 1995), learn the material you need to present so well that, at least sometimes, you can speak rapidly—faster than a typical person.

When you want the audience to appreciate a key argument, present this argument slowly. People can direct more attention to arguments that are expressed slowly (Smith & Shaffer, 1995)

When speaking, try to replace hesitations, such as “um”, with silence or a short breath. Short pauses are perceived as more confident than hesitations (Kirkland et al., 2022).

How to practice: While preparing a speech, practice articulating some of the sentences you will express in the first couple of minutes as rapidly as possible—faster than you will speak during the speech.

How to practice: If preparing a speech, practice articulating the key arguments as slowly as possible—about twice as slow than you will speak during the speech.

How to practice: When practicing a speech, deliberately insert a few pauses. These pauses will gradually feel more natural. Then, imagine you are just about to say “um”, but replace this sound with a pause.



Your stories

If you can tell compelling stories—rather than merely present a series of facts—members of the audience often feel like they have been transported into your narrative. They imagine themselves in the setting you describe. When transported into a story, people tend to evaluate the speaker and content favourably (Green & Brock, 2000). Here are some strategies that can absorb an audience into your narrative.

First, imply the story is special and important. Then, as vividly as you can, outline an interesting setting or situation as well as a struggle or problem you must solve.



Then present a solution to this struggle--a change that either you or someone else initiated to solve the problem



Outline the aftermath of this story—such as what you learned or gained



Hook and situation: I seldom tell this story. But anyway, after working at a company for three years, a restructure was announced

Struggle: On the new chart, my role had disappeared. Nobody was responding to me emails either.

Solution: My manager then told me that she had arranged a better role for me—but had not communicated this change until she was certain

Resolution: The role utilises my strengths. I have now learned not to catastrophise in silence.

Phases of each story arc



When recounting a narrative, you can begin with a vivid event that unfolded later in the story, such as “I will never forget how my voice trembled when I knew my life would change”.



Describe the setting vividly—such as the features you saw, heard, smelled, and felt. You can even say “Imagine this scene...”



Refer to your thoughts or emotions, such as thoughts around a struggle or problem you need to resolve



Justification: This strategy enables you to evoke suspense immediately, overcoming the need to present the background first

Example: I was standing outside an imposing building, with small towers on the roof and the sound of a gentle breeze.

Example: I was thinking “How can I possibly encourage this person to change?”

Vivid details

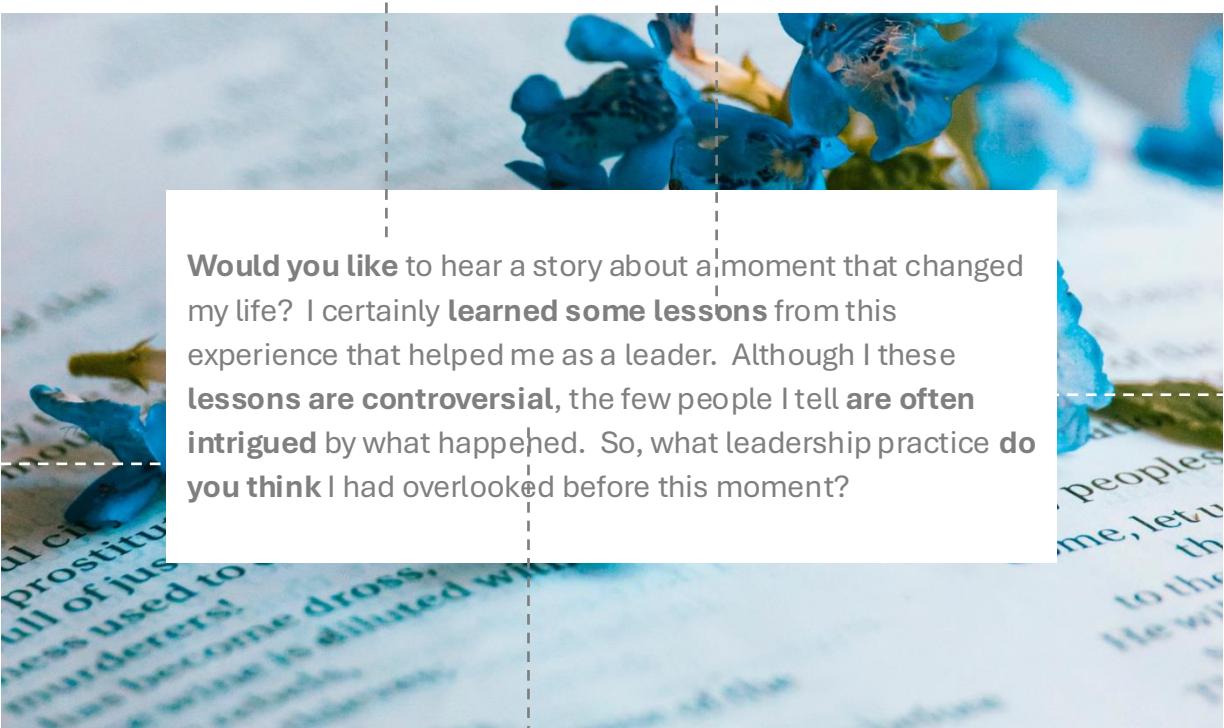
Preambles to stories

Some phrases spark curiosity. Listeners who experience curiosity feel more immersed and engaged in the stories or arguments you express (Garrosa et al., 2017), potentially manifesting as humility (Leary et al., 2017). And, when they listen, you feel more humble too. (Lehmann et al., 2023) From the following example, identify or adapt the phrases you might like to express in the future. Then

- identify one phrase you would like to adapt and to practice each week for a month,
- when the opportunity unfolds, first smile, pause for a moment, and then express one or more of these phrases before you recount a story or argument.

When granted choice, people become more curious
(Verdugo et al., 2023)

When people feel they will learn useful information, they feel more curious (Liquin & Lombrozo, 2020)



Would you like to hear a story about a moment that changed my life? I certainly **learned some lessons** from this experience that helped me as a leader. Although I these **lessons are controversial**, the few people I tell **are often intrigued** by what happened. So, what leadership practice **do you think** I had overlooked before this moment?

People tend to be curious when they learn that other individuals had been curious
(Dubey et al., 2021)

A sense of controversy fosters curiosity (Lowry & Johnson, 1981)

After individuals predict how a story might unfold, they become more curious (Brod & Breitwieser, 2019)

Online communication

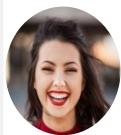
Physical cues during videoconferences

For several reasons, if leaders want to foster humility in their workgroups or organisations, they need to be credible speakers online:

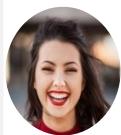
- First, online meetings often diminish time pressure in staff—and this diminished time pressure tends to inspire people to learn and thus promote humility.
- Second, when online, staff are especially inspired by visionary leaders (Whitford & Moss, 2009)—and thus may be more receptive to a vision around humility

Below are some validated practices on how to communicate effectively online during videoconferences. Identify the practices you feel you could apply more often in the future—and then skim these practices before a future online meeting.





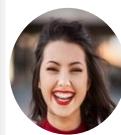
In Zoom or similar platforms, reposition the other person so the eyes of this individual are slightly below the camera lens. Then, when speaking, maintain eye contact.



Shift the computer or computer slightly away from you, so the audience can, at least partly, see your arms.



Position the camera to be below your lips so you are peering slightly downwards rather than upwards.



The background, whether real or actual, should be simple and static, devoid of clutter or distractions.

Evidence: People seem more credible when they direct their eyes close to, but slightly below, the eyes of person to whom they are speaking (Gao et al., 2025; see also Basch & Melchers, 2025).

Evidence: People seem more likeable and prominent online when their gestures seem to match the content of their speech. So, provided individuals are sincere, they may seem more credible if the audience can observe their gestures (Du et al., 2025)

Evidence: When individuals are peering down towards the camera rather than staring upwards, they seem more persuasive and influential (Gruber et al., 2023)

Evidence: Clutter in the background can increase the likelihood that observers may overlook key information, such as gestures or signals (Semizer & Rosenholtz, 2025).

Expressing humour

The appropriate use of humour

Some leaders tend to be serious. Other leaders often like to express humour. Humour can be divided into four main kinds (Martin et al., 2003):



Aggressive humour	Affiliative humour	Self-enhancing humour	Self-defeating humour
comprising sarcasm, ridicule, or other comments that mock other people and can be upsetting or even offensive	intended to improve relationships, in which individuals laugh together at benevolent rather than derogatory remarks	in which people use humour to improve their emotions, such as laugh at the absurdities of their life—constructively and not derisively	in which individuals disparage themselves either to attract approval from other people or to conceal unpleasant feelings

Affiliative humour (Lin et al., 2025) and, sometimes, self-defeating humour (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016) can promote a trusting work environment in which individuals feel safe to express their anxieties and concerns, potentially enabling humility. The question, however, is how can leaders enhance their capacity to express affiliative humour and self-defeating humour, especially in challenging settings?

Responses to common questions you can practice

To cultivate your affiliative humour, you could occasionally practice humorous answers to common questions, such as “What do you do?” or “How was your day”?



Exaggerate your first thought in response to this question to a ridiculous extent.



Insert an amusingly specific detail into your first thought or response to this question.



Consider the opposite of some feature of your first thought in response to this question. For example, rather than respond modestly, inflate your achievements to an amusing extent.

Question: “How was your day?”

Answer: “The traffic was so slow—I had to shave three times along the way”.

Question: “What did you do today?”

Answer: “I ate three Teddy Bear biscuits—despite buying these biscuits for my children”

Question: “Is your work going well”

First thought: Mediocre

Answer: Absolutely. I expect to receive a Novel Prize by Tuesday week.

Modify the first answer that enters your mind



Allude to one of your slightly embarrassing flaws



Express an answer that is inevitably true of everyone and thus meaningless

Question: “Did you enjoy the presentation?”

Answer: “Yes, and I understood everything, besides most of the words”.



Insights about these practices



Your goal is not to write the most hilarious quip.

Instead, simply practice these strategies 20 times each, enabling you to effortlessly uncover humour in more circumstances.



You could use AI to suggest other amusing responses to the common questions that people ask.

Receptivity to opposing beliefs

Receptivity to opposing beliefs and ideologies

Introduction to receptivity

One of the key features of humility is called receptivity—the tendency of some people to be receptive to opposing beliefs or ideologies. That is, humble people tend to genuinely consider opinions or beliefs that diverge from their own assumptions or preferences, such as the arguments of political rivals. To learn about the hallmarks of this receptivity to opposing beliefs (Minson & Chen, 2022),

- identify someone you greatly admire,
- on a scale from 1 to 10, rate the degree to which this person exhibits the following hallmarks of receptivity to opposing beliefs; then rate yourself on these traits.
- consider how you differ from the person you admire on these traits?



Hallmarks of receptivity



I believe that listening to people who express opinions that diverge from my beliefs can be valuable and informative



I often find that people who express arguments that diverge from my beliefs are compelling and logical.



When I read or listen to opinions that diverge from my beliefs, I often feel interested and excited—not angry, disgusted, or upset.

I believe that no belief is sacred and that people should be able to debate almost every matter.

The benefits of receptivity

Many studies have investigated the benefits of this receptivity (e.g., Yeomans et al., 2020). For example, people who seem receptive to opposing beliefs can more readily persuade, convince, and influence other individuals. Likewise, colleagues tend to perceive anyone who is receptive as

- someone with whom they would like to work and collaborate in the future,
-
- someone who they can trust—that is, a person whose judgment tends to be astute,
- someone who they perceive as professional—that is, a person who they would like to represent their organisation.

Therefore, people should learn how to demonstrate they are receptive, as well as how to be receptive, to opposing beliefs and opinions.



1 Explicitly refer to your receptivity



First, to convince people of your receptivity, explicitly indicate that you value receptivity to opposing beliefs and apply practices that are consistent with these values.

Here are some examples of comments you could express. Perhaps record other comments that refer to your values or practices around receptivity.

Some examples of useful comments



- I trust the judgment of people who are receptive to perspectives that diverge from their own beliefs
- To challenge myself, I consider perspectives that diverge from their own beliefs
- I believe the world would be better if people were receptive to opposite beliefs.
- To refine my understanding of the world, I deliberately read and listen to opinions that differ from my own beliefs.



-
- ...
- ...



2 Show doubt and regret to demonstrate your receptivity

Some people say they are receptive to opposing beliefs but, in practice, divert their attention from arguments that diverge from their assumptions about the world. Therefore, rather than only refer to your receptivity, you should also demonstrate this receptivity. The following practices have been shown to increase the extent to which people seem receptive to diverse beliefs. Scan your diary and identify a planned event in which you may be able to apply each of these practices.



Convey uncertainty, such as expressing doubt about an opinion or indicating a range, not a specific number or outcome, when forecasting the future.

Examples: “I am not entirely certain, but I believe...” or “I believe we can increase sales by 2% to 10%”.



Acknowledge mistakes you have committed, such as recognising your previous beliefs or decisions were incorrect.

Example: “I now regret this decision”



Highlight drawbacks of your position or proposal, such as concede a minor blemish in an argument you are advocating.

Examples: “Compared to rivals, this proposal is better on 4 of the 5 key measures”.



Convert statements to questions if possible.

Example: “Do you feel we could try this option instead?”



3 Use specific words to demonstrate this receptivity

The following list presents some words or phrases, presented in **bold**, that exemplify and demonstrate receptivity to opposing beliefs (Hussein & Tormala, 2024; Yeomans et al., 2020). To help you remember to use these words or phrases, in the next 10 emails you write, include at least one of the words.



First-person single pronouns and agreement

- I **understand** your argument
- This argument **makes sense to me**
- I **appreciate** this concern you raised
- I **agree** with this argument.



First-person plural pronouns

- We need to solve this matter
- This change could help **us**.



Hedges

- I **somewhat** believe this option is better
- I do feel this option **may be** better



Positive words rather than negations

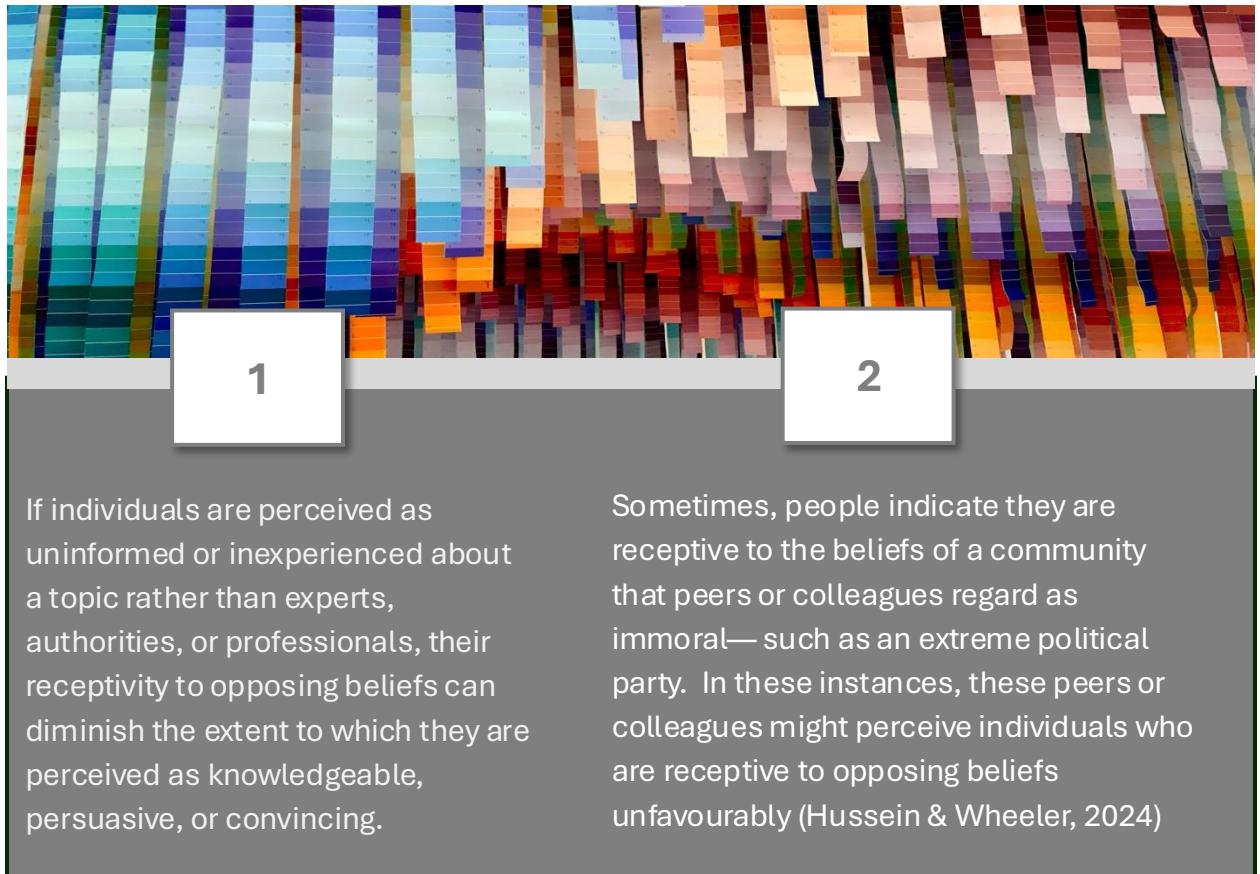
- I feel this option is **helpful**
- **Yes**, this issue is important



Note: You should limit words like “no” or “wrong” if possible

Caveats to consider

To reiterate, in general, people should be receptive to opposing beliefs and should demonstrate they are receptive to opposing beliefs. However, research has uncovered two complications that people should consider:



To accommodate these complications, first consider how you establish your credibility or expertise before you display the hallmarks of receptivity, doubts, or regret. Here are some examples. Perhaps record some additional examples too

- Although I have been reading about this topic for 5 years, I am still uncertain about a few key matters.
- Although I have spoken to 50 experts on this topic, I am still learning.



Second, if ever you inform people that you are reading or listening to the arguments of a rival community, organisation, or political party, here are some strategies to consider.

Indicate that you are exploring these arguments primarily so you can more easily refute these opinions more convincingly.



Examples: “If I read their work, I feel I can more easily rebut uninformed arguments in the future”.

Indicate you are reading or listening to individuals who are unique—and differ from other members of this rival community, organisation, or political party.



Example: Although I would not usually read their arguments, I feel this person is unique because she actually is frustrated with both parties”.

How to foster a culture of receptivity

As a leader, you should also embrace this receptivity as well as encourage your staff to embrace receptivity. To achieve this goal, you could first organise a couple of workshops on how to influence as well as interact and negotiate with other people. In these sessions, you could embed some of the previous materials on receptivity. In addition, you might consider the following exercises that past research has shown tends to foster receptivity to opposing ideologies (for a review, see Minson & Chen, 2022):



Workshop activities to practice



- Encourage staff to adopt the perspective, such as the goals, hopes, and challenges, of their opponent—even if only to learn how to counteract this perspective (Todd & Galinsky, 2014).
- Before presenting an argument about a topic, encourage staff to consider the opposite of their beliefs on this topic (Lord et al., 1984).
- Before negotiating with someone from a rival community, such as a regulator, encourage staff to consider both the qualities you like and dislike about this person (see Brauer et al., 2012).

Second, as a leader, to inspire staff, instil the belief that organisations and communities can improve dramatically over time. The culture, behaviours, and many other features of these collectives can transform fundamentally.

Did you know



This belief that groups can change curbs unfavourable attitudes to rivals (Goldenberg et al., 2018; Halperin et al., 2011) and thus promotes receptivity to opposing beliefs and perspectives

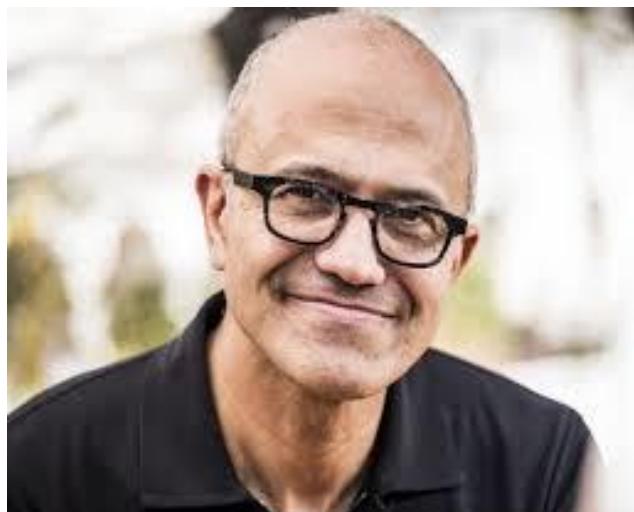


To embed the belief that organisations and communities can improve dramatically over time, consider these practices



- You may discuss how conflicts between European nations have dissipated since early last century
- You may refer to leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who inspired significant change in society.
- You can discuss case studies of how leaders transformed the values, culture, and behaviour of organisations.
- You may consider all the characteristics of groups that can change, such as beliefs, ideologies, or lifestyles.

Case study: Satya Nadella



- Before 2014, teams at Microsoft strived to outsmart and to outperform one another
- After Satya became CEO in 2014, he fostered a growth mindset to inspire teams to learn from one another.
- For example, the Azure and Windows teams solved vital problems together
- The culture embraced active listening and curiosity about the insights of other teams.

Did you know



If leaders believe staff or teams can change, these staff and teams are more likely to change ; see research on the Pygmalion Effect (Kierein & Gold, 2000).

Messages to foster humility

Multi-vector messages

1 Present a scientific discovery

Leaders, can also send regular messages that offer helpful advice but also, subtly, foster humility and temper narcissistic behaviour. You could first present some scientific discovery like this example



During heated discussions, some people raise their voice, express frustration, and exhibit anguish or even tears. Although we should always respond compassionately to each other, staff who display these intense emotions may exhibit vulnerable narcissism—a tendency in which people are preoccupied with their own needs and unduly sensitive to criticism or similar challenges. These individuals often depict themselves as victims and may deploy emotional outbursts to silence other people, to attract sympathy, or to portray themselves as more caring or moral than anyone else. Emotional outbursts should not be confused with morality. Indeed

- people who often depict themselves as moral saints, called moral grandstanding, are more likely to be narcissistic ([Grubbs et al., 2019](#))
- people who display rage during outbursts tend to be less empathic than are other individuals ([Weiblan et al., 2021](#)),
- thus, emotional outbursts do not indicate that someone is caring or moral—but may suggest this person is narcissistic or unable to regulate emotions well, perhaps because of problems with their ventromedial prefrontal cortex ([Golkar et al., 2012](#)).

Did you know



In one study, when leaders deliberately inserted words that are synonymous with improvement, inspiration, trust, or cooperation in their emails—such as prevail, accomplish, strive, thrive, and master—the efficiency of staff improved by 35% in one week (Stajkovic et al., 2019).



2 Present some practical advice

After you present this discovery, suggest a few recommendations that staff could follow to improve their life. Here is an example.

So, in response to outbursts from other individuals

- first listen respectfully and relax for a few seconds before you respond,
- show you understand their words and feelings—but refrain from the temptation to acquiesce or agree,
- prompt these individuals to consider a plausible outcome they could imagine in the future, perhaps in 3 months; this orientation to the future can temper strong emotions,
- demonstrate humility with confidence; you may, for example, concede that you are obviously not positioned to know all the circumstances, nuances, or complications and will need to take time to deliberate,
- together with these individuals, transcribe the relevant circumstances—but separate these details into three clusters: details on which all relevant parties agree, details that one party can substantiate later, details that are hunches but hard to substantiate,
- if the emotions do not subside, uncover an opportunity to postpone the discussion...."



These messages can



- encourage humble rather than narcissistic behaviour.
- teach staff how to work or to interact more effectively
- reinforce your credibility and knowledge.

Messages that foster humility & wellbeing

Wellbeing

One of my priorities is to foster a workplace that protects and enhances the wellbeing of staff. So, I thought I share some research on the attributes or practices that improve wellbeing more than many people realise. Specifically, research suggests that people are more likely to experience positive emotions and feel satisfied with life if



- they are more motivated to learn from other people or experiences than to demonstrate their capabilities,
- they acknowledge their limitations rather than behave defensively when challenged,
- they consider and appreciate the perspectives of other people (Bauer & Weatherbie, 2023),
- they acknowledge, rather than conceal, their faults and imperfections (Casale et al., 2024).

These qualities that promote wellbeing tend to be called a quiet ego—and show that people tend to feel better when they embrace humility rather than arrogance.

Messages on how to attract respect and admiration

Respect

I know most of you work very professionally, effectively, and diligently. Yet, my sense is that some of you may not always feel your efforts and capabilities are respected enough. So, I certainly hope that we can foster a workplace in which everyone receives the respect they deserve. For example, I want to help leaders learn how to recognise and appreciate the strengths and talents of staff—introducing practices such as strength spotting.

In the meantime, I thought I would share some insights about some research on how staff can enhance the degree to which they are trusted, admired, and respected. One simple strategy is to show that you are receptive to diverse beliefs. People who seem receptive to diverse beliefs—such as beliefs that differ from their own positions or opinions—are more likely to be perceived as likeable, credible, and reputable (Yeomans et al., 2020). To show that you are receptive to diverse beliefs, you simply need to consider these practices:



- when you disagree with someone, pose questions to learn more about their stance rather than contradict their beliefs, at least initially,
- when you disagree with an argument, first identify the features of this argument you like and appreciate,
- when you disagree with someone, observe and label the emotions you feel, such as frustration; briefly imagine these labels written on a cloud and visualise the cloud drift away,
- when you disagree with someone, as soon as possible, attempt to display a positive emotion, such as smile,
- position your argument as another helpful perspective, such as “I suppose another viewpoint is...” rather than as correct.

Messages on how to limit but accept mistakes

How to limit but accept errors

None of us are perfect. Because we are busy, flawed, and prepared to experiment with unfamiliar tasks and practices, we all commit mistakes and errors. Consider this question:

- A bat and a ball cost \$1.10 in total.
- The bat costs \$1.00 more than the ball.
- What is the cost of this ball?

Initially, many people assume the ball costs 10 cents. But,



- if so, the bat would need to cost \$1.00 more or \$1.10.,
- the total would be \$1.20. The ball actually costs only 5 cents.

An error on this question is common and innocuous. But some mistakes can be more consequential and evoke feelings of stress or regret. Fortunately, as research shows, (Bowes et al., 2024), people who question their beliefs and listen to perspectives that differ from their own opinions are not as likely to commit these errors. So, to prevent costly mistakes & to improve your thinking

- every week, consider the opposite of one or more of your beliefs or assumptions, such as the drawbacks of a teaching method you like,
- then attempt to update this belief, so your opinion is nuanced, such as “this method is not as helpful in some settings”,
- every day, attempt to learn 2 to 3 novel perspectives, strategies, practices, or facts about the world,
- remind yourself that people frequently overestimate the accuracy of their beliefs—and recognise that you may not be immune to this tendency either.

Messages on how inspiring videos to watch

Interesting videos

If you are anything like me, although I feel so busy, I still manage to waste some time at night watching unhelpful videos. Of course, we all need to relax, but I would like to watch videos that may be more informative and helpful in some way. So, if you want to watch more useful or inspiring videos, here are my suggestions. These videos tend to improve wellbeing, motivation, insight, humility, and other helpful states of mind:



- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOLmD_WVY-E
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xmvpx1kIEBQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRHIGuoH6ic>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0opUbo9VdY>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe3ndaTKjuM>

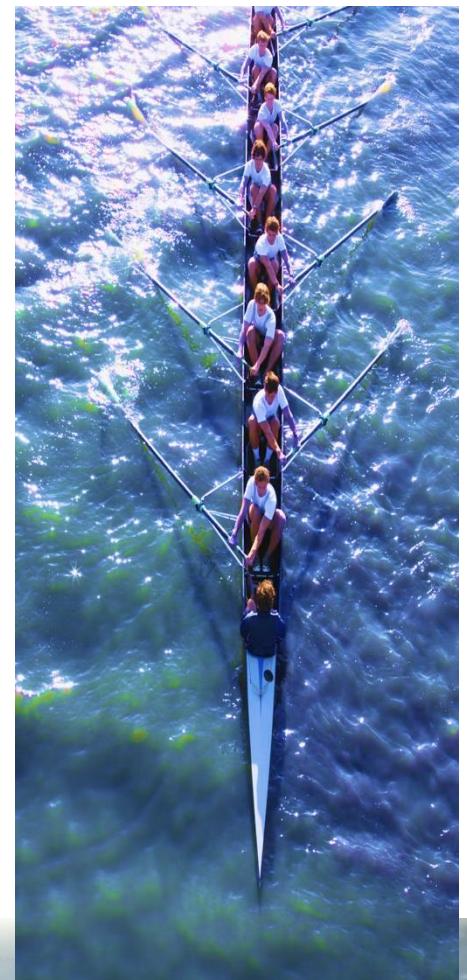
Let me know of other videos that you perceive as enlightening, humbling, or inspiring as well—so I can add these suggestions to the list.

Covert humility

Incidental rewards

Usually, if people receive some reward in response to a specific behaviour or action, they are more likely to repeat this behaviour or action in the future. So, if defensive people receive a reward after they exhibit the hallmarks of humility, they may be more likely to demonstrate humility in the future. Here are some hallmarks of humility that should be rewarded:

- The individuals acknowledge moments in which they feel anxious or dejected
- The individuals deliberately attempt an unfamiliar or challenging activity to develop themselves
- The individuals do not pretend to be certain or sure, but rather concede they do not know something
- The individuals concede a mistake they have committed or a limitation in their capabilities
- The individuals participate in workshops or other events to address a shortcoming
- The individuals acknowledge the benefits of ideologies or perspectives they do not usually adopt
- The individuals express praise, gratitude, or empathy to people from other communities



However, to reward these hallmarks of humility, you need to address two challenges. First, you need to decide how to reward these individuals. That is, you need to know which rewards defensive, conceited, or even narcissistic individuals tend to value. The following table outlines the rewards these individuals are likely to value.

Rewards that conceited individuals often value	Examples
Admiration	You may say “People really admire you when you acknowledge your limitations”
Public recognition	In a public forum, you may state “I really like how Robert sometimes admits when he is not sure”
Leadership roles	You may say “Because you are aware of your boundaries and limitations, I think you deserve more leadership responsibilities”.
Introductions to the elite	You may say, “I think the president of this association would really value your sensitivity to multiple perspectives. I know someone who could introduce you to her”.

Note: These rewards should be genuine. People who are defensive or narcissistic may be sensitive to patronising or feigned praise.

Of course, you can reward the hallmarks of humility only if these individuals actually exhibit the hallmarks of humility. So, how can encourage this behaviour? That is, how can you encourage defensive or even conceited narcissistic people to demonstrate humility. In essence, you need to contrive circumstances in which individuals feel almost compelled to act with humility. The following list illustrates how you can compel people to act with humility.



Setting in which people feel compelled to act with humility



Ask questions with the word “ever”, such as “Have you ever felt a bit down?”, “Have you ever committed a mistake at work?”, or “Have you ever felt empathy towards these individuals?”



Ask questions with the word “any”, such as “Have you attempted to address any limitations in your skills?”, “Have you identified any good traits in this person you do not like?”, or “Are you grateful to anyone in this organisation?”



Contrive a circumstance in which these individuals need to show respect towards someone who they would usually dismiss. For example, you might invite someone from a diverse community to speak at an event.

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So, now you know the rewards that defensive and even narcissistic individuals value and the circumstances that may compel these individuals to show the semblances of humility. Therefore, in the future, you should

- occasionally, ask these individuals the questions that tend to elicit these hallmarks of humility, such as “Have you attempted to address any limitations in your skills”,
- reward these responses immediately, “People really admire you when you acknowledge your limitations”,
- then gradually, over time, raise these expectations, so that you reward only humility that seems voluntary or substantial.

Practice first

This exercise may be challenging. So perhaps first ask the questions that are designed to elicit humility to yourself and then answer these questions. The questions, then, will feel more familiar over time.

Vicarious disapproval

Rather than reward acts that epitomise humility, you could also disapprove behaviours or inclinations that exemplify conceit or impede humility. For example, in the following table, the first column delineates some acts that you could disapprove. The second column illustrates some comments you could express to display your disapproval.

Acts that you could disapprove	How to disapprove these acts
A person who seems conceited and also shuns unfamiliar settings or circumstances	You could say “I think this person is afraid to commit mistakes or experience uncertainty. They are obviously not courageous enough to challenge themselves and to broaden their wisdom” (Fletcher, et al., 2020; Schiffrin & Liss, 2017)”.
A person who often flaunts expensive items, such as a luxury car	You could pose something like, “I think he needs to compensate for something; perhaps he does not feel he can earn respect from his opinions, his arguments, or his capacity to understand and to accommodate other people” (DeCelles & Norton, 2016).



Alternatively, to imply that you, or even other people, disapprove of behaviours that epitomise conceit, maybe label these behaviours disparagingly. To achieve this goal, you could express one or more of the statements that appear in the following table.



- I am wary of people who exhibit **grandiose** narcissism—and always seek attention and boast about their achievements.
- I do not respect people who display **vulnerable** narcissism—and always blame other individuals when they fail to achieve their goals.
- I am very concerned about people who demonstrate **malignant** narcissism—in which they feel the urge to harm the individuals who question their behaviour.
- I am wary of people who exhibit **communal** narcissism—and always inflate their contributions to the community but do not really care.
- I do not respect people who display **self-righteous** narcissism—and depict other individuals as immoral and believe only their actions are right and proper.
- I do not like people who demonstrate **neglectful** narcissism—and seem oblivious to the needs and concerns of other people.
- I am concerned about people who adopt a **fixed mindset**—and underestimate the capacity of other individuals to grow and to improve over time.



To learn these statements...

- walk into one room—perhaps in your house or workplace,
- in this room, attempt to memorise the first statement, at least roughly,
- then, walk to the next room of this house, workplace, or other location and memorise the second statement, and so forth.

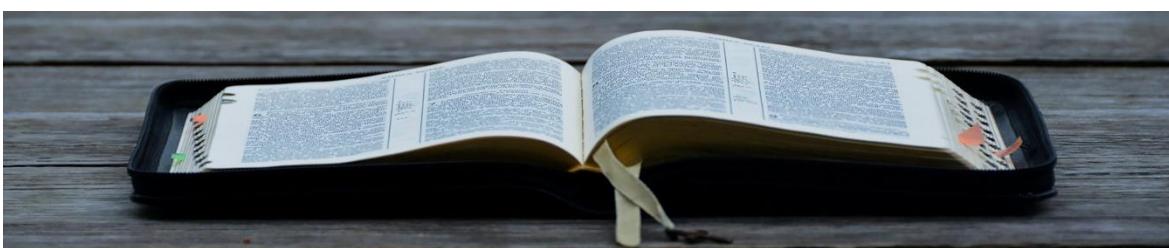
You may need to repeat this exercise several times. Whenever you want to recall one of these statements, imagine yourself in the corresponding room; these images, called a memory palace, may help you retrieve these statements.

Individual assessment

Glossary of terms

To learn how to identify which individuals are narcissistic, you will first need to understand the following set of traits. To help you memorise these terms, imagine a person—in your past or even in movies or TV—that you feel epitomises each trait.

Trait	Description
Key personality traits	
Antagonism— also called low agreeableness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses contempt or distrust towards other peopleSeldom displays compassion, sympathy, or understandingSelfish rather than cooperative or accommodating.Disobeys rules
Neuroticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prone to unpleasant emotions, such as anxiety or hostilityActs impulsively and emotionally in response to challenges
Extraversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gregarious and sociableAssertiveSeeks excitement.
Variations of narcissism	
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Believes they are special—and thus entitled to admiration, praise, positions of leadership, and other privilegesNarcissism tends to combine antagonism and entitlement
Grandiose narcissism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A blend of extraversion, antagonism, and entitlementExaggerates skills and contributionsCraves attention, admiration, or leadership
Vulnerable narcissism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A blend of neuroticism, antagonism, and entitlementDirects rage or contempt towards criticsUndermines or mocks other people subtlyPortray themselves as victims of injustice, inflating their pain

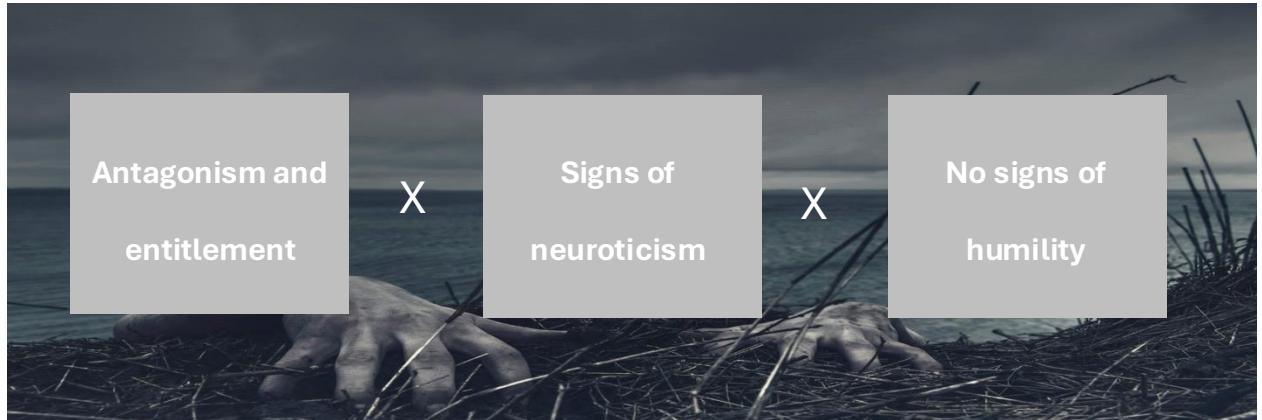


When is narcissism especially detrimental

People who exhibit the signs of narcissism can, sometimes, be effective leaders or members of staff. However, narcissism is especially likely to be detrimental if

- the individual also exhibits the signs of neuroticism and
- the individual demonstrates no signs of humility (e.g., Rong & Hu, 2023)

The following infographic represents which individuals may be most destructive.



Psychometric testing

Organisations can use psychometric testing to assess these traits, such as

adapt standard tools; for example, organisations can identify low agreeableness and high neuroticism from most personality tests

develop their own measures of narcissism and humility from existing scales and public instruments

measure the attributes that diminish narcissism and foster humility, such as future self-continuity, a growth mindset, and self-compassion.



CVs and profiles



To some extent, CVs, social media profiles, and other similar documents can offer some insight into whether individuals may be narcissistic or entitled. Here are some examples of features or properties of these documents to consider.

Feature	Implication
Demographics	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People who have completed degrees—especially in two fields—are more likely to be humble (see Liu et al., 2024)• However, people who have been educated at the most prestigious institutions are less likely to be humble
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narcissism tends to diminish with age (Orth et al., 2024)
Experience	
Diverse challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People who have been exposed to diverse challenges, such as worked in other nations or fields, develop integrative complexity: they recognise and integrate diverse perspectives—a sign of humility (Maddux et al., 2013)• Even working in multi-disciplinary teams or an interest in ambiguous art can promote integrative complexity (see Hagtvedt & Vohs, 2022; Solomon & Hall, 2023).
Social media	
LinkedIn profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some features of social media profiles, especially in LinkedIn are more common in narcissistic people• These features include multiple images of the person in background photos, biographies that exceed 300 words, over 15 jobs, and more than 50 skills (Junge et al., 2024).

Narcissistic leaders

If the applicant is a leader, such as a CEO, you may be able to utilise public information to ascertain whether this person is likely to be narcissistic, entitled, or conceited. To illustrate, applicants who demonstrate more than two of the following criteria are likely to show narcissism (see Mailhos et al., 2016; Rijzenbilt & Commandeur, 2013).

Do official publications, such as annual reports, include large photographs of this applicant?

Has this applicant been assigned multiple role titles—despite really assuming one role?

Has this applicant submitted a biography—in some database or profile—that is significantly larger than 90% of the biographies on this site?

Has the applicant received multiple awards?

Is this applicant often mentioned in media releases about the organisation?

When signing a document, such as a consent form, is the signature larger than 80% of other signatures.

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Did you know

After people watch short videos of someone speaking, they can often ascertain whether this person who is likely to be narcissistic. Perceptions from short videos can predict a range of outcomes, such as the likelihood this person is distrusted by leaders in other companies (Gupta & Misangyi, 2018)

Did you know

Some researchers have identified the words that narcissists tend to utilise more frequently. Organisations can use these word lists, comprising a few hundred terms, to identify the signs of narcissism (see Anglin et al., 2018)

Use of AI to assess social media posts

Organisations can utilise AI tools, like Chat GPT, to estimate the humility of people from their social media posts (see “The computational anatomy of humility” by Guo et al., 2024).

First, utilise past research to collate the characteristics of posts that epitomise humility and arrogance.



Characteristics of posts that demonstrate humility



Recognises limitations in their knowledge or beliefs: Concedes their knowledge might be limited or their beliefs may be accurate or misguided



Reconsiders beliefs when presented with new evidence: Willing to adjust their arguments in response to novel information



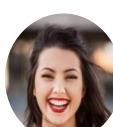
Acknowledges personal beliefs: Admits their arguments are personal beliefs rather than definitive facts



Seeks diverging information: Demonstrates they have actively sought information or evidence that challenges or refines their arguments



Respects diverse perspectives: Acknowledges and values a perspective that diverges from their argument



Mindful of the feelings of other people: Acknowledges how arguments about important matters can be emotional and distressing

Characteristics of posts that demonstrate arrogance



Uses dichotomous language: Expresses words that imply that only one perspective is true, and every other perspective is false



Unsupported claims: Presents an argument as true, without any reference to evidence or other support.



Rejects diverse perspectives: Disregards rather than engages with perspectives that differ from their beliefs



Condescending attitude: Expresses comments that undermines the intellect or experience of another person.



Ad hominem: Attacks characteristics of the person who is expressing an opposing argument rather than considers the argument directly



Displays prejudice: Expresses unfair judgements about a person or group, purely derived from the demographic of this person—such as gender, race, or education.

- Next, use tools to scrape the social media posts of job applicants
- Finally, design AI prompts that estimate the percentage of these posts that exhibit the hallmarks of humility or arrogance; here is an example

Below is a table that lists six features of humble social media posts and six features of arrogant social media posts. I will now upload various posts a job applicant has written in social media—each separated by a semi-colon. Can you indicate whether each post exhibits the features of humility, the features of arrogance, or neither...

Interviews

During interviews, you are more likely to recognise narcissism if you ask the right questions and learn the main signs of this trait. Here are some questions that have been shown to elicit some of the signs of narcissism (see Eschleman et al., 2024)

Do you consider yourself a natural born leader or someone who has had to learn how to lead? Who has helped you develop these capabilities?

Imagine that other members of your team have agreed upon a plan. However, you disagree with this plan. How do you proceed?



Imagine you lead a team. One member publicly questions one of your decisions. How would you respond if you discover you were correct?

Why do you feel some teams are more effective than other teams?

How would you respond if uncertain on how to improve a team?

Describe how you delegated work to people to boost their development?



Signs of narcissism



Assumes they are invariably right and certain, such as “I always reach the best decisions”



Expresses frustration if questioned, such as “My team needs to trust that I reach decisions carefully”



Perceived events as opportunities to validate their status, such as “This outcome would demonstrate I am in charge for a reason”



Believes people should always respect their authority, such as “I would remind the team I am the leader for a reason”

Describes themselves more favourably than other people. Perceives other people as good or bad and unlikely to change.

Nevertheless, if individuals also display some humility, their narcissistic tendencies are not as likely to be detrimental in the workplace (Rong & Hu, 2023). Here are some potential signs of humility you might extract from answers to the previous questions.



Signs of humility



Perceives challenges as opportunities to improve and to develop, such as “I could learn something from their comments”



Encourages open, honest communication between staff and leaders, such as “Leaders should always enable staff to voice opinions, even if these opinions are not entirely correct”.



Displays empathy and respect to other people, even during conflicts, such as “I would check they are feeling okay about the disagreement and remind everyone their opinion always matters”

Refers to the qualities and strengths of other people.

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Words

Here are some phrases that suggest humility rather than narcissism (Hanel et al. 2023)



- “I feel that...” or “I wonder that...” rather than “I am sure” or “definitely”
- “Sometimes” rather than “always” or “never”
- “Possible” rather than “of course”, “obviously”, or “the fact is”

Did you know

People who seem more authentic during jobs interviews will perform better on the job—as rated by their supervisors (Heimann & Schmitz-Wilhelmy, 2025)



During job interviews, narcissistic people are more inclined to inflate their qualities, capabilities, and achievements (e.g., Paulhus et al., 2013). In contrast, humble people are more authentic (see Oc et al., 2020). So, to identify humble individuals, consider these signs of authenticity—signs that predict exemplary job performance:



Signs of authenticity

- The individuals refer to the emotions they were experiencing during some event
- The individuals refer to one of their personal opinions—but acknowledges that not everyone may share the same perspective
- The individuals refer to an experience or problem that is private and personal
- The individuals relays the precise words that both parties said during a conversation
- The individuals describe an event vividly rather than hazily or superficially.

Special tasks

The overclaiming effect

Organisations may also arrange special tasks that have been shown to uncover some of the signs of narcissism or conceit. One practical example is the overclaiming effect. For example,

- you could ask participants to indicate the concepts they understand that are relevant to this role,
- about a third of the concepts should be fictitious,
- individuals who contend they are familiar with more than two or three of these fictitious concepts are more likely to be narcissistic, entitled, or conceited (Grosz et al., 2017).



An example of over-claiming

Here is an example of a test you could administer to people who should understand financial concepts. The benefit is this test can

- identify people who inflate their knowledge—common in people who are narcissistic
- simultaneously assess the familiarity of individuals with these concepts.



Specify which of the concepts you feel you understand

Quarterly earnings	Succession planning	Due diligence
Leveraged buyout	Fortunate duty	ESG
Alphabetic caps	Pre-emptive rights	A double singularity
Social licence	Noncompete agreement	Clawback provision
Hostile takeover	Zebra meetings	CSR
GZg	Golden parachute	A restructure shelf
Materiality	Maroon investments	Private equity

You can also introduce other contrived tasks to uncover narcissism, entitlement, and conceit. For example, individuals who are narcissistic often dismiss advice from other people—especially people they regard as low in status or rank. To measure this tendency, arrange an executive assistant to write something like the following email:



- The link can then open a helpful article about the organisation.
- However, use a platform, such as Qualtrics, so you can check whether the individual opened the link.
- Narcissistic individuals are more likely than humble individuals to disregard this link altogether.



How to diminish faking

During interviews or psychometric testing, narcissists sometimes deliberately inflate their humility or conceal their conceit. Fortunately, researchers have uncovered a few strategies that might diminish the likelihood of impact of this problem.



Ask individuals “Do you perceive other people as capable or as worthy as you?” Narcissistic people, even when inflating their humility, are often unwilling to acknowledge that other people are as capable or as worthy as they are (Kruse et al., 2017).

Indicate that your interviews or psychometric tests contain some questions that are designed to assess honesty (Moon et al., 2024)

Indicate the organisation values honesty—and people who are not honest may be disqualified (Moon et al., 2024)

Did you know about this clever strategy?



During interviews or after psychometric tests, ask individuals "How certain were you in your responses to the previous questions—from very uncertain to very certain". If they maintain that certainty is high,

- people who claimed to be honest and humble are indeed more likely to exhibit the signs of humility and honesty; for example, they seldom cheat,
- people who acknowledge they exhibit signs of narcissism, psychoticism, and Machievellianism are indeed more likely to cheat (Santos et al., 2025).

Referees

In principle, referees are often positioned better than anyone else to ascertain whether a person is narcissistic, entitled, and conceited. In practice, however, referees are not usually especially informative because

- job applicants often choose the referees they believe will be favourable,
- organisations seldom ask the questions that tend to unearth narcissism,



Did you know



<https://greatvineinsights.com/> is a service in which staff will contact past colleagues of an individual you are interviewing and check whether this person tends to exhibit narcissism, aggression, or similar traits.

Questions to ask referees	Interpretations of answers
Would you say people like this individual more at the beginning or after a while?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narcissistic people tend to be liked more initially but less over time (e.g., Paulhus, 1998).
Would you regard this person as more confident or humble? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referees may be willing to describe a narcissistic person as very confident—almost to a degree that may elicit your suspicion.

Parental humility

Advantages that humble children and adolescents enjoy



When children develop significant humility, they experience many benefits, as extensive research has shown. Here are some examples.

- They tend to experience mental **wellbeing**—such as satisfaction with life, positive emotions, a feeling of purpose, and a sense of thriving (Chukwudebe et al., 2025)
- They tend to attract and to maintain **friendships** as well as resolve conflicts and communicate honestly and openly (Jongman-Sereno et al., 2025)
- They tend to **think more critically** as well as logically and are not susceptible to misinformation or defensive behaviour (Fabio & Suriano, 2025)
- They tend to feel **motivated to learn** and are thus receptive to feedback, advice, and novel technologies (Porter et al.. 2020) and diverse perspectives,
- They are less susceptible to the personal problems that coincide with narcissism, such as social media addiction (Nguyen et al.,2025), gambling, or other dangers,
- They are less susceptible to the social problems that coincide with narcissism, such as bullying and aggression (Schunck et al., 2025).

Please tick which of these benefits of humility you value. Tick all that apply.





Matters to consider

Record some of the strategies you may have attempted to foster these benefits in the past—such as approaches you tried to enhance the wellbeing of your children.

- .
- .
- .
- .
- .

We believe you might be able to replace most of these strategies and approaches with merely one program—radical humility—saving you a lot of time & effort



Did you know



Many parents feel their children are already humble enough. However, these children may be humble in many settings—but not necessarily when they feel stressed or upset. Therefore, these children do not experience all the benefits of humility.

How do humble parents benefit their children?



How do you feel humble parents may benefit their children? Please identify two to three possible reasons.

- .
- .
- .
- .

Here some possible answers.



- Children tend to regard humble parents as role models and thus develop humility themselves (Peng et al., 2020),
- Children tend to trust humble parents (Davis et al., 2010)—and thus, for example, will disclose their problems & embrace advice,
- Humble parents are not as susceptible to misinformation and thus tend to reach suitable decisions (Koetke et al., 2022),
- Humble parents can decipher, and thus accommodate, the needs and emotions of their children better (Lehmann et al., 2025).

Did you know

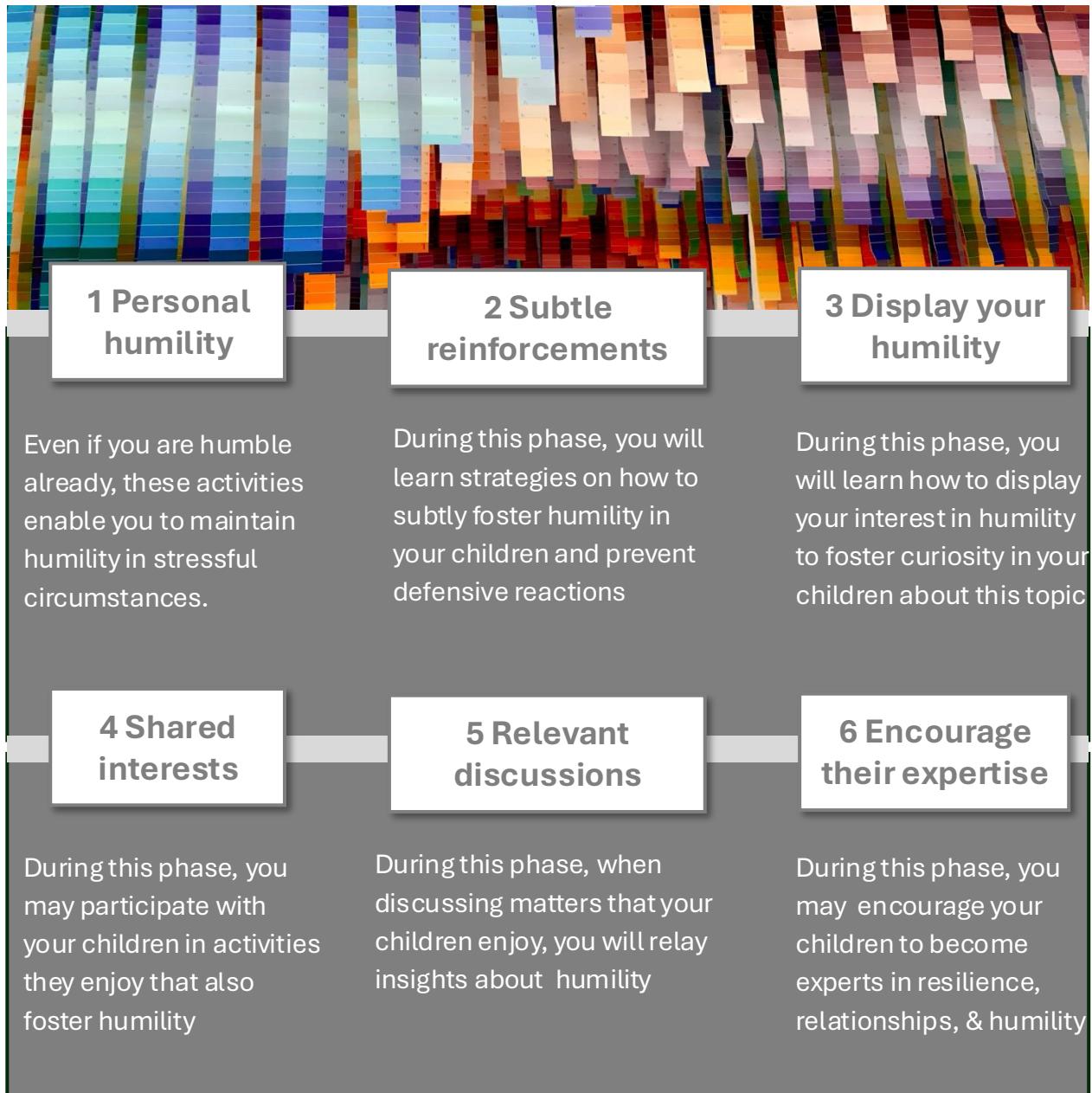


Humble people tend to be more resilient during challenging times. For example, they tend to be more composed during exams (Huynh et al., 2023).

Overview

To embrace humble parenting—an approach that fosters humility and thus enhances wellbeing and development in you and your children—parents often complete six phases.

- Even if you complete only a subset of these activities, you and your children will benefit
- You will learn most of the key insights during the first two phases.



Relevance of this phase

Some children and adolescents are always receptive to the advice of their parents. If their parents suggest that humility is beneficial, their children will listen.

Some children and perhaps most adolescents are not always receptive to this advice. If their parents suggest that humility is beneficial, their children may respond defensively.



Children who listen: If your children usually embrace your advice, this phase may not be as relevant to you. Perhaps only skim these materials.



Children who do not always listen: This phase is especially useful to children who sometimes appear defensive or conceited: very common in adolescents



Display your humility

Overview of this phase

During this phase, you will expose your children to objects or actions—such as relevant articles, personal journals, or observable behaviours—that demonstrate your interest in humility.

Goal of this phase

Your goal is to increase the extent to which humility is familiar to your children. Your children may thus become more curious about this topic and perhaps more receptive to future discussions about humility.

Did you know



When some object or action seems familiar, people tend to judge this object or action more favourably (e.g., Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001).



Activity 1: Choose which objects or actions to display. Possible objects or actions to display may be



- pages from these handbooks or articles about humility,
- written exercises you have completed to foster humility,

Or you could display behaviours that you learned tend to foster humility such as

- concede a drawback of each recommendation you suggest to someone else,
- after you fail on some activity, attempt this task again until you improve,
- if stressed, initiate some activity that evokes mild pain, such as unpleasant exercise,
- listen to the humble meditation audio before you sleep.



Activity 2: Consider opportunities to display these objects or actions
For example, you may



- position these objects in a common room, such as a kitchen
- refer to information you have learned when speaking to a friend.

Note: To prevent defensive reactions, do not explicitly refer to these objects or actions yet.



Participate in shared interests

Overview of this phase

During this phase, identify some activities that you and your children can undertake together. During these activities, embed some practice that you learned can foster humility. Here are some examples that you could adapt.



Disclose to your family a problem you are experiencing and seek advice from your children



Deliberately engage in an activity together that elicits modest levels of anxiety or stress but also some pride or excitement



Ask your children who they feel they know who has changed fundamentally over time.



Embed humility into discussions

Overview of this phase

During this phase, identify topics you and your children like to discuss. Then, uncover opportunities to embed insights you have learned about humility into these discussions. Here are some examples



Suppose your children like to mock people who never fulfill their promises

How to embed humility. Discuss how you learned about implementation intentions—in which people imagine the precise circumstances in which they want to initiate some change. Highlight how this strategy may enable people to change fundamentally.



Suppose your children like to talk about topics that revolve around bravery

How to embed humility. Discuss the strategies you learned about that enhance resilience—and could explain how some people can be brave



Suppose your children like to discuss one of their hobbies or interests

How to embed humility. You might be able to suggest how they could translate this hobby or interest into an ambitious aspiration—an aspiration that can instil a sense of stability.

Teacher humility

Benefits of humble teachers



When teachers are humble, their students tend to be more engaged in the class, more comfortable with peers, and more creative.

The following list presents some reasons that humble teachers are effective. Which of these reasons do you feel is the least compelling. Attempt to access this study.

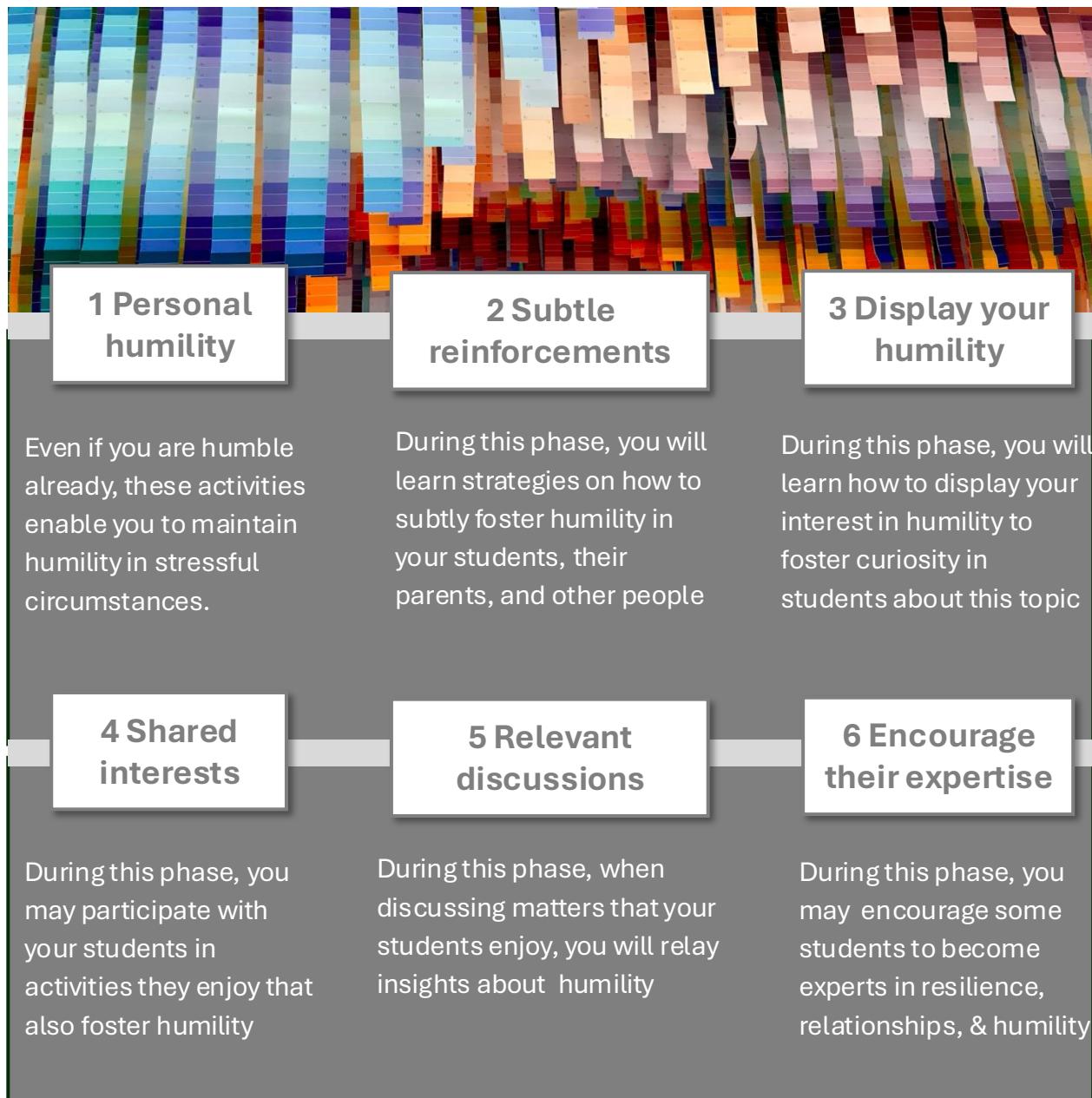
- Humble teachers **genuinely listen** to students—and thus students feel respected and, consequently, more confident to think independently (Zhang & Chi, 2025).
- Students feel they will be accepted by a humble teacher, despite their mistakes. They will thus attempt, rather than shun, **unfamiliar topics** (Porter et al., 2024).
- If teachers acknowledge their flaws, students feel their peers will accept their faults too—and thus **feel included** rather than excluded (Porter et al., 2024).
- Students are more likely to **trust the advice** of a humble teacher—and may thus apply the learning strategies this teacher recommends (Kwok et al., 2022).
- Students perceive humble teachers as supportive. To **reciprocate** this support, they feel more compelled to study diligently (Kwok et al., 2022).
- Humble teachers concede their knowledge is limited; so, rather than listen passively, students will **co-create knowledge** with teachers (Zou & Chen, 2025).



Overview

To embrace humble teaching—an approach that fosters humility and thus enhances wellbeing and development in you, your students, and other people—teachers often complete 6 phases.

- Even if you complete only a subset of these activities, you and your students will benefit
- You will learn most of the key insights during the first two phases.



Relevance of this phase



Some students, their parents, or other colleagues may seem defensive or narcissistic. This phase outlines some activities that might gradually diminish these tendencies over time.



Display your humility

Overview of this phase

During this phase, you will expose your students, their parents, or other colleagues to objects or actions—such as relevant articles, personal journals, or observable behaviours—that demonstrate your interest in humility.

Goal of this phase

Your goal is to increase the extent to which humility is familiar to these individuals. These individuals may thus become more curious about this topic and perhaps more receptive to future discussions about humility.

Did you know



When some object or action seems familiar, people tend to judge this object or action more favourably (e.g., Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001).



Activity 1: Choose which objects or actions to display. Possible objects or actions to display may be



- pages from these handbooks or articles about humility,
- written exercises you have completed to foster humility,

Or you could display behaviours that you learned tend to foster humility such as

- concede a drawback of each recommendation you suggest to someone else,
- after you fail on some activity, attempt this task again until you improve,
- if stressed, initiate some activity that evokes mild pain, such as unpleasant exercise.



Activity 2: Consider opportunities to display these objects or actions
For example, you may



- position these objects in a common room, such as a classroom,
- imagine circumstances in which you can demonstrate humility.

Note: To prevent defensive reactions, do not explicitly refer to these objects or actions yet.



Participate in shared interests

Overview of this phase

During this phase, identify some activities that you and your students can undertake together. During these activities, embed some practice that you learned can foster humility. Here are some examples that you could adapt.



Disclose to the class a problem you are experiencing and seek advice from your students



Deliberately engage in an activity together that elicits modest levels of anxiety or stress but also some pride or excitement



Ask your students who they feel they know who has changed fundamentally over time.



Embed humility into discussions

Overview of this phase

During this phase, identify topics you and your students like to discuss. Then, uncover opportunities to embed insights you have learned about humility into these discussions. Here are some examples



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