

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE HUMILITY

If you would like to cultivate a greater level of humility in your life, the great news is that there are concrete practices you can engage in to do so! Based on extensive research, the activities below are proven to strengthen humility. It is recommended to begin with one activity listed below and, over time, expand to others that appeal to you. Like anything, intention and consistent practice are integral to developing lasting positive change.

Develop self-compassion: Humble individuals speak to themselves in a supportive, loving, compassionate way, particularly when they are going through a challenging time. There are several concrete activities we can engage in to practice self-compassion and thus become more accepting of our limitations to cultivate greater humility.

- 1. Comfort your body:** Eat something healthy, rest/take a nap, or go for a walk. Anything you can do to improve how you feel physically gives you a dose of self-compassion.
- 2. Write a letter to yourself:** Think of a situation that caused you to feel pain. Write a letter to yourself describing the situation. Then, write down what your best friend might say to comfort you.
- 3. Use affirmations:** Write down several self-affirming statements and repeat them to yourself. Examples could include, *"I am doing the best I can," "I am going through a tough time, and it will pass,"* or *"I accept and love my strengths and limitations."*
- 4. Practice mindfulness:** Even a quick exercise, such as meditating for a few minutes can be a great way to nurture and accept yourself while you're in pain.

Seek feedback: Humility requires an understanding of our strengths and limitations. You can gain greater awareness of and counter your internal biases about them by asking for honest feedback from those who make you feel emotionally safe. It takes courage, bravery, and, yes, humility, to listen to and accept feedback, even when it comes from someone we trust. Although it can be painful to receive critical feedback, you can demonstrate humility by listening, acknowledging their comments, and using the information to grow and improve.

Acknowledge when you are wrong: English poet and essayist, Alexander Pope wrote, *"To err is human."* We all make mistakes, and have, or inevitably will, harm or offend someone. A principal component of humility is to be aware of and compassionate about our shortcomings while maintaining a steadfast belief in our innate worth. Humility also requires self-awareness to admit when we've made a mistake or caused someone harm, and it takes courage and maturity to admit when we are wrong and apologize.

Express gratitude: As an evolutionary adaptive trait to keep us safe, we constantly scan for potential threats and deficits in our immediate environment. This negativity bias can sully our view of self and the outside world. One way to combat this and cultivate humility is through gratitude practice – being aware of and appreciating the good in our lives. This can be done by keeping a gratitude journal, expressing appreciation to a friend in a handwritten note, and acknowledging three things that you are appreciative of each day before bed.

HUMILITY AND FORGIVENESS: THE COMPASSIONATE PATH TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Compliment others: The practice of sharing genuine compliments with others is another way to cultivate greater humility. For example, make a point to verbally compliment others throughout the day – whether you know them or not– on the attributes you value about that person. Another way to compliment others is to write a letter to a loved one complimenting them on their strengths.

Celebrate in private: Although alluring, the feelings of feeling special, worthwhile, and admired when we celebrate around others can often be fleeting and result in a quick return to our baseline levels of self-esteem, whether that be high or low. Balancing celebrating with others and praising ourselves in private when we succeed may prove to be a more effective strategy. When we acknowledge and praise our own successes privately, it can lead to a higher self-image and less of a need to seek external validation from others.