

# What Does Humility Look Like? - Humility

## EXPLANATION:

Humility is defined in many ways and can be difficult to describe. In this activity, students are to investigate with their peers ways of defining, describing, and visualizing humility. Students create a shared definition of humility and use their creativity to draw a graphic interpretation of the definition. This activity gives opportunities for students to critically reflect on humility and its influence on their lives and society.

**GRADE LEVELS:** 11–12

**STUDENT GROUPING:** Whole class discussion and individual artwork

**ACTIVITY LENGTH:** 60 minutes approx.

## CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *SOCIAL AWARENESS*

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

## SCOPE OF TASK:

There has been an increased focus in psychological literature on the importance of humility (see resources section below). A significant aspect of emotional intelligence is situational awareness, which is the quality of being aware of oneself, the group, the actions of individuals, and social dynamics—people who are humble also tend to be cognizant of these factors. Adopting a humble mindset increases overall psychological well-being, promotes engagement in prosocial behavior, improves our social functioning, and helps maintain strong personal relationships.

1. Explore the meaning of humility with students. It can be a difficult concept to define and can be perceived differently. Some even consider humility to be a weakness, as when it is equated with meekness. To build a shared understanding, ask students to research the definitions of humility—dictionaries or the Internet can be used. Make sure to provide guidelines about appropriate Internet usage in the school context.
2. Ask students to write definitions they find on the board. They also might discover words or quotes that align with their ideas of humility. Discuss the definitions with students, asking them which definitions they agree with, and create a shared definition that the class will use to describe humility. Write down this agreed-upon version and hang it on a wall where a display can be created.
3. Once the students have decided on a definition, discuss what humility looks like in practice. Can they describe images or visualizations that capture the idea of humility? Images might depict humbleness, modesty, self-confidence, promotion of others, recognition of others, sharing credit with others, etc.
4. Inform students that they are going to have an opportunity to create an image of what they think humility looks like. Provide the students with art materials, and encourage their individual thinking and creativity to produce a picture of their interpretation of humility. Suggest that the students sit in groups so that they can continue to discuss ideas of humility as they create their artwork.
5. Once students have completed their artwork, bring the students back together to share. Provide time for each student to share their artwork with the class and provide some details about what they created. Once each student has shared their ideas, they can add their artwork to the wall space where the class definition has been placed to create a display.

### Humility

is not thinking less of yourself;  
it's thinking of yourself less.

**C.S. Lewis**

6. At the end of the activity, reflect with students on their understanding and feelings about humility. Some questions to lead the reflection could include:
- Do we still agree with our shared definition of humility? Why or why not?
  - Should we add anything to the definition? If so, what?
  - What do you personally think about humility? How important is it?
  - How hard was it to illustrate humility?
7. Invite other classes to view the class humility display, and engage in further critical discussions about humility and its place in life and society.

## RESOURCES:

- Computers with Internet access or dictionaries
- Whiteboard
- Paper, pens, paints, or other art materials for drawing

There are many articles online about the benefits of humility. See some examples below:

- **“Measuring Humility and Its Positive Effects”**: Davis, Jr., Don Emerson & Hook, Joshua N. (2013, September). Measuring Humility and Its Positive Effects. *Observer*. Accessed from the Association for Psychological Science website:  
<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/measuring-humility-and-its-positive-effects>
- **“The Effect of Humility on Emotional and Social Competencies: The Mediating Role of Judgment”**: Hendijani, Rosa & Sohrabi, Babak. (2019). The Effect of Humility on Emotional and Social Competencies: The Mediating Role of Judgment. *Cogent Business & Management*, 6(1). Accessed from Taylor & Francis Online:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311975.2019.1641257>