

The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

Humility

Humility means “the state of being humble.” Both the word humility and humble have their origin in the Latin word humilis, meaning “low.” A low focus on the self is not self-deprecating but rather an accurate recognition of one’s accomplishments and worth.

Being humble allows a person to acknowledge their limitations, imperfections, and mistakes. It means learning to value oneself in a way that isn't dependent on outperforming other people or being the best. Being humble also means putting the needs of another person before your own and thinking of others before yourself. There are many emotional and social benefits associated with humility including self-control, generosity, tolerance, acceptance and a lower sense of entitlement.

Humility and kindness are two of important values in life. When first considered humility can seem like a negative quality emphasising weakness rather than a trait of strength. Humility is frequently associated with being too passive, submissive or insecure. However, definitions of humility promote an understanding that every human is valuable: an acknowledgement that each person is worth no more or less than another person. The Merriam-Webster dictionary succinctly defines the word as “freedom from pride or arrogance.” C.S. Lewis sums up the concept suggesting “humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.” Humility requires an acceptance of oneself and humble people are confident and competent in themselves. Examples of modest and humble behaviour include:

- Acknowledging mistakes
- Showing gratitude to others
- Being coachable and accepting feedback
- Supporting others to succeed
- Assuming responsibility
- Situational awareness
- Celebrating their and others’ achievements
- Competing with self rather than others

Emotional and social intelligence involves the ability to be cognisant of and control one's emotions embracing mindfulness. In educational settings it is essential that teachers actively promote humility and gratitude to build a safe and collaborative environment. Children and students who are humble can recognise their own strengths and acknowledge their challenges whilst valuing others’ contributions and personal characteristics. Showing appreciation to peers in classrooms support relationships increasing and enhancing student self-worth and the creation of cooperative learning spaces.



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In the workplace humility has been defined as a dispositional quality of a person – whether that person is a leader or an employee – that reflects ‘a self-view that something greater than the self exists’ (Ou et al. 2014, p. 37). Humble workplace cultures are also environments where people feel valued, honesty is embraced, positivity is paramount, and success is celebrated. Humility in the workplace is about showing respect to colleagues and valuing all contributions. Research has identified characteristics of humble leaders. Research shared in the International Journal of Management Reviews found that people described as “humble” share the ability to:

- Acknowledge their limitations and strengths;
- Appreciate others’ strengths and contributions without letting their ego get in the way;
- Maintain an open mind and a desire to continuously learn from others;
- Seek diverse feedback often;
- Apologize when they are in the wrong; and
- Avoid being defensive, aggressive, or domineering (Nielsen & Marrone, 2010)

Humble people know their self-worth!

References

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