AWE NARRATIVE

Difficulty: CASUAL | Frequency: VARIABLE | Duration: 15 MINS

WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

This exercise asks you to recall and describe a time when you experienced awe. Awe is an emotion that is elicited by experiences that challenge and expand our typical way of seeing the world. Research suggests that awe involves sensing the presence of something greater than the self, along with decreased self-consciousness and a decreased focus on minor, everyday concerns. Experiences of awe have been shown to expand people's perception of time and improve life satisfaction.

TIME REQUIRED

15 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

Think back to a time when you felt a sense of awe regarding something you witnessed or experienced. Awe has been defined as a response to things that are perceived as vast and overwhelming and that alter the way you understand the world. This sense of vastness can be physical (e.g., a panoramic view from a mountaintop) or psychological (e.g., a brilliant idea). People may experience awe when they are in the presence of a beautiful natural landscape or work of art, when they watch a moving speech or performance, when they witness an act of great altruism, or when they have a spiritual or religious experience.

Try to think of the most recent experience you've had that involved the feeling of awe. Once you identify something, describe it in writing with as much detail as possible.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Rudd, M., Vohs, K. D., & Aaker, J. (2012). Awe expands people's perception of time, alters decision making, and enhances well-being. *Psychological Science*, *23*(10), 1130-1136.

In three experiments, participants who were induced to feel awe, compared with other emotions, felt that they had more time available, were less impatient, were more willing to volunteer their time to help others, preferred experiences over material products, and reported greater life satisfaction.

WHY TO TRY IT

Taking time out to reflect on past experiences of awe can help people break up their routine and challenge themselves to think in new ways. Evoking feelings of awe may be especially helpful when people are feeling bogged

down by day-to-day concerns. Research suggests that awe has a way of lifting people outside of their usual selves and connecting them with something larger and more significant. This sense of broader connectedness and purpose can help relieve negative moods and improve happiness.

SOURCES

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This practice is part of Greater Good in Action, a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and HopeLab.