



# Cultivating Virtue in Leadership

## HUMILITY

A Foundational Virtue for  
Leaders?



JOHN TEMPLETON  
FOUNDATION





# Overview



- What is it?
- Why do you want it?
- How do I get it?
- How do I help others get it?
- Resources





**Humility**: the ability to put one's own achievements and talents in proper perspective (Patterson, 2003). Leaders with humility are **aware of their own strengths and weaknesses** and are able to see and **admit their mistakes**. They are interested in, **value and seek out the knowledge and opinions of others, particularly dissenters**. Humility allows one **to operate in a way that enhances others**, leading to strong organizational performance through its influence on organizational learning and resilience (Vera and Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). The opposite of humility is arrogance and hubris.





# Humility



Once upon a time, there was a very important man, well-known for his accomplishments...but there was a problem.

# Attitudes and Atmosphere



## DISCUSSION

- How have you seen this virtue (**humility**) modeled?
- What may discourage leaders from modeling humility?
- What is the role of **honesty** in exhibiting humility?
- Are there risks to being humble?





# Why? – Some Inspiration



<http://www.oprah.com/world/nelson-mandela-shares-the-importance-of-humility-video>





# Why? –More Inspiration



*“Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real.” -- Thomas Merton*



Short videos:

[Dickson](#) - Humility is core to leadership.

[Bill Treasurer](#) - Authenticity





# Research on Humility



Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez (2004): Do not confuse humility with shyness, lack of ambition, passivity, or lack of confidence.

Rowatt et al. (2006). Humility (in college students) was not associated with self-reported low self-esteem, pessimism, or depression (rather gratitude, forgiveness, spirituality and general health).

Elliott (2010) developed a scale to measure humility which included four subscales: openness, self-forgetfulness, accurate self-assessment, and focus on others.

HEXACO Model: Humility includes sincerity, fairness, greed avoidance and modesty

Ashton & Lee (2005). Related to Agreeableness (Straightforwardness and Modesty) facets in the Five Factor Model of Personality.



# Research on Humility in the Workplace



Collins (Level 5 leadership) where the leader combines intense professional will with personal humility.

Sousa & van Dierendonck (2015): The higher in the hierarchy, the more a humble leader impacts followers in terms of action-oriented leadership. Less humble leaders in lower positions compensate through a strong action-oriented style.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikKUdmKk0KI>



# Descriptions



Being Humble includes behaviors indicating:

- Openness
- Focus on others
- Accurate self-assessment
- Sincerity
- Fairness
- Avoiding greed (crediting others)
- Modesty
- Straightforwardness





# How? Approaches to Being More Humble

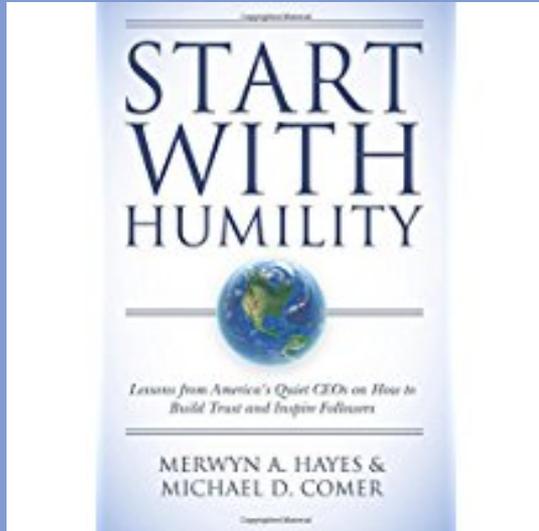


- Check-in on yourself
- Be Intentional
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Seek honest feedback
- Keep a reflection diary
- Use “I” language rather than sweeping generalizations
- Be culturally sensitive





# Recommended Book



Hayes & Comer (2010)

- *Finding your authentic core*
- *Case studies and takeaways*
- *Practical advice and exercises*



# Relationships to ISLLC Standards



## 2. ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL NORMS

Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

## 3. EQUITY AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Discussion: Why might these standards be grouped together in this course?





# Humility as a Foundation Virtue

## Philosophy of Education 2. ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL NORMS

Effective leaders ...

- a) Act according to and promote the professional **norms** of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning and continuous improvement.
- b) Safeguard and promote the **values** of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.
- c) Lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students and staff member's backgrounds and cultures.





# Humility as a Foundation Virtue

## 3. EQUITY AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Effective leaders ...

- a) Ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.
- b) Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.
- c) Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.
- d) Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.
- e) Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision-making and practice.
- f) Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.





# Resources



Benjamin Franklin Circles. (2016, January 25). Are you proud of your humility? "Once upon a time" quoted and paraphrased from <http://benfranklincircles.org/humility/are-you-proud-of-your-humility>

Chavez, V. (2005). *Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practices* (Documentary). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaSHLbS1V4w>

Collins, J. (2005). Level 5 Leadership: the Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(7 / 8), 136-146.

Dickson, J. (2011). *Humilitas: A lost key to life, love and leadership*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI. and book review by Jeff Davis at <https://jeffdavis.blog/2016/04/27/humilitas-a-lost-key-to-life-love-and-leadership-book-review/>

Elliott, J.C. (2010). *Humility: Development and analysis of a scale*. University of Tennessee.

Hayes, M.A., & Comer, M.D. (2010). *Start with humility: Lessons from America's quiet CEOs on how to build trust and inspire followers*. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership: Westfield, IN.

Huzinga, R.B. (2016). An understanding of humility-based leadership impacting organizational climate. *Emerging Leadership Journeys (Regent University School of Business & Leadership)* 9 (1), pp. 34-44.

Neal, V. (2015, February 14). *Cultural Humility: Skilled Dialogue*. Education Focus Workshop. Office of Equity, Social Justice, and Multicultural Education. De Anza College. ([http://www.neighborworks.org/Documents/TrainingandServices\\_Docs/Training\\_ProfDev\\_Docs/Resident-Services-Convening-February-2015/Cultural-Humility\\_Feb-23\\_NW.aspx](http://www.neighborworks.org/Documents/TrainingandServices_Docs/Training_ProfDev_Docs/Resident-Services-Convening-February-2015/Cultural-Humility_Feb-23_NW.aspx))

Sousa, M., & van Dierendonck, D. (2015). Servant leadership and the effect of the interaction between humility, action, and hierarchical power on follower engagement. *Journal of Business Ethics*, (132(4)). <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2725-y>.





# Closing Activity

## “Triangle-Square-Circle”



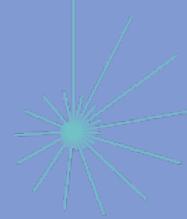
### Reflection

1. Draw a **triangle** and next to it write down **three important points** from the module.
2. Draw a **square** and next to it write down anything that “**squares**” **with your thinking**.
3. Draw a **circle** and next to it write down anything that is still “**circling**” **in your head or questions** that you have.

Partially quoted from:

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/triangle-square-circle>





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