

## Lesson 9: Habits of Excellence: Humility

### PURPOSE

To help students understand and practice habits of excellence, especially the habit of humility.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand what habits of excellence are and how to develop them.
2. Understand the habit of humility.
3. Motivate students to develop humility.

### VOCABULARY

- Habits of excellence: behaviors acquired through regular practice which help people achieve excellence as persons.
- Humility: knowing and acknowledging both one's strengths and limitations

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- [Video](#): Atomic Habits: How to Get 1% Better Every Day – James Clear
- Humility Is / Is Not Worksheet
- The Failure Premortem
- The Success Post-Birth

### PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lesson. Recall the definition of solidarity and the importance of pursuing excellence on a group level. Highlight the Liberian women as an example of achieving excellence by working together. Recall the definition of freedom for excellence that the students learned in earlier lessons and the importance of pursuing excellence in everyday life.

**Step 2:** Recall that in grades 6 and 7, students learned about habits and how to develop excellent ones. Ask the students if they can recall what habits are and explain that the more someone performs a certain action, the more that action becomes ingrained in our brain as a habit. Ask the students if they can recall what habits are and explain that a habit is something you do so often that it becomes natural to you.

Ask students if they can think of examples of excellent and non-excellent habits. Write a table with two columns on the board, one for excellent and one for non-excellent habits. Write down the students' examples.

Mention some of the most important habits of excellence and write them on the board:

perseverance  
resilience  
courage  
wisdom  
truthfulness  
kindness  
generosity  
humility  
patience

Write the definition on the board:

Habits of excellence: behaviors acquired through regular practice which help people achieve excellence as persons.

Highlight that habits of excellence lead to the excellence of a person *as a person*, or of the person as a whole. While being excellent in a particular subject or skill, such as being an excellent musician or getting the highest grade in math is certainly noteworthy, developing habits of excellence primarily refers to becoming excellent as a human person. Everyone's most important task is to become excellent as a person.

This is because what we are is reflected in how we act and what we do. If we become excellent ourselves, we will perform excellent actions. For example, we can only perform courageous or kind actions over time if we become courageous or kind ourselves. And becoming excellent will also have the consequence of becoming more successful in different areas of one's life: e.g. a person who perseveres will be more successful at studying for school; a person who grows in patience, will also develop better leadership or mentorship skills, etc.

The good thing about habits of excellence is that no one is born with them, but everyone can acquire them through practice and learning. By making excellent choices in everyday situations, we ourselves become excellent. Developing excellent habits is hard at first and we would most like to avoid the hard work of developing them, but the good news is that it becomes easier through time. It is just important to start!

**Step 3:** To learn how to develop habits of excellence and motivate the students for developing them, play the [Video: Atomic Habits: How to Get 1% Better Every Day](#). After watching the video, ask the students to highlight some of the ideas from the videos that stuck with them.

After hearing the student's comments, make sure to highlight the following:

If you are able to get 1% better each day, you would end up 37 times better at the end of the year.

We should build our physical environment to stimulate positive habits.

Optimize for the starting line, and the outcome will come.

Good habits have immediate costs and delayed reward. You need to figure out how to bring reward into the present moment.

Every action that you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.

True change is not behavior change but identity change: e.g. the goal is not to read a book, but to become a reader.

The way to become something is through doing.

If you can change your habits, you can change your life!

**Step 4:** Explain that in this lesson, the students will learn about one habit of excellence: humility. Humility is one of the habits that is often misunderstood or viewed negatively. To better understand humility, divide students into groups and ask them to work on the [Humility Is / Is Not Worksheet](#). Groups should cut out all the cards from the worksheet and determine for each card whether it applies to humility or not. Students should be prepared to provide arguments for their thinking process and choice.

After all groups finish discussing, ask them to share their conclusions with the class. If groups differ with regards to some answers, ask them to present their reasoning to the class. Have the whole class vote on which group provided better arguments to support their choice. Clarify each of the examples on the basis of the Teacher's Answer Key provided with the worksheet.

**Step 5:** Explain that humility is definitely not a sign of weakness as it is sometimes portrayed. Only strong and mature persons can be truly humble. Humble persons do not diminish their worth or dignity by being humble, they are aware that they possess an immense value, as well as certain talents, strengths and qualities. As one saying goes, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less." Write the vocabulary definition of humility on the board:

Humility: knowing and acknowledging both one's strengths and limitations

Humble people are aware that other people have dignity and unique qualities and for this reason they do not place themselves above others. They are also aware that they have limitations, weaknesses, and are prone to occasional failures. Humble people know that part of the human condition is to be imperfect. Nevertheless, this does not make them despair but motivates them to move forward and always work on developing habits of excellence in trying to improve themselves further. By knowing and accepting the truth about themselves, they are able to feel at ease with themselves and work cheerfully on developing greater habits of excellence in their lives.

Motivate the students to develop the habit of humility in their everyday lives. Ask them to think which kind of actions would help them become humble and work on [The Failure Premortem](#) exercise proposed by James Clear in the video they watched earlier.

In the second part of the exercise, ask them to work on [The Success Post-Birth](#) worksheet to reflect on how to achieve success in developing the habit of humility.

**Step 6:** Summarize. Recall the definition of habits of excellence and the key ideas from the video by Jack Clear. Recall the definition of humility and the characteristics of humble people. Motivate the students to practice developing humility in their lives moving forward.

#### HUMILITY IS / IS NOT WORKSHEET

A sign of weakness	Being aware both of one's strengths and weaknesses	Being passive in the face of adversity
Not standing up for oneself	Not thinking too highly of one's talents and achievements	Lacking self-confidence
A sign of strength	Insecurity	Not being a show off
Being aware that one always has room for improvement	False modesty	Good for teamwork

**Humility Is / Is Not Worksheet – Teacher’s Answer Key**

Humility is not:

- A sign of weakness – on the contrary, one needs to be strong to recognize and acknowledge their limitations.
- Being passive in the face of adversity – humble people do not just remain passive in the face of adversity; they fiercely oppose it.
- Not standing up for oneself – humility is not opposed to standing up for oneself. Humble people do not put themselves above others, but they also do not have to allow others to disrespect them.
- Lacking self-confidence – humility is not lacking self-confidence but feeling at ease with one’s strengths and limitations.
- Insecurity – humility is not insecurity but humble people are aware of their strengths and their value of intrinsic dignity.
- False modesty – humility is not false modesty since humble people do not falsely negate their strengths, but they acknowledge them in the right amount (i.e. not overemphasizing them, not negating or diminishing them).

Humility is:

- Being aware of both of one’s strengths and weaknesses – humble people are aware of their strengths and talents, but they are also aware of their limitations and weaknesses.
- Not thinking too highly of one’s talents and achievements – humble people are aware of their talents and achievements to a right degree, i.e. they do not overemphasize them or falsely inflate them.
- A sign of strength – to be humble and acknowledge one’s limitations, a person needs to be strong. Only strong people can be humble.
- Not being a show off – humble people are not show offs; they do not brag about their looks, what they have, how much money they make or what they have achieved.
- Being aware that one always has room for improvement – humble people are aware that no matter how good or proficient they are, they can always be better. This serves as a positive motivation to keep developing habits of excellence.
- Good for teamwork – humble people are usually good team players since they do not put their own desires or needs above others, but they are aware that others have desires and needs which should be equally observed.

**THE FAILURE PREMORTEM**

Think of developing the habit of humility. Now, imagine six months from now that you failed in developing it. Tell the story of why you failed by answering the following questions.

1. Why did you fail in developing greater humility?

2. What challenges did you encounter?

3. What took you off your course?

4. What could you have done differently to improve the chances of succeeding?

**THE SUCCESS POST-BIRTH**

Think of developing the habit of humility. Now, imagine six months from now that you succeeded in developing it. Tell the story of why you succeeded by answering the following questions.

1. How did you develop humility? Which actions did you take?

2. How did you overcome challenges that you encountered?

3. What did you do to not be taken off your course?

4. Which little things you did to improve the chances of succeeding?