
APPENDIX 10.1: Awe Outing

Please take this instruction sheet with you and go somewhere outdoors. While the key to this exercise is that you can experience awe anywhere, you are more likely to experience it in places that are vast, surprising, or unfamiliar. That said, the key to eliciting awe is adopting the right frame of mind: noticing whatever is coming into your senses, being curious about what is unknown, and welcoming calm. Some possible ideas are to go to a natural setting (e.g., the shore of a body of water, a mountain, somewhere you can see the sunrise/sunset), an awe-inspiring urban setting (e.g., the top of a skyscraper, a historic monument, a botanical garden, or just somewhere new), or beautiful indoor settings (e.g., an aquarium, a cathedral, a gallery).

Before you start, turn off your cell phone. Cell phones (and other digital devices) can be distracting and draw your attention away from what's happening around you. Even better, don't bring your phone with you at all so that you won't be tempted to check it. During your awe outing, try to approach what you see, hear, smell, or otherwise sense with freshness, imagining that you're encountering it for the first time. Then follow these steps:

- Take a deep breath in. Count to six as you inhale and seven as you exhale. Feel the air move through your nasal passages and hear the sound of your breath. Come back to this breath throughout your awe outing.
- As you get going, feel the ground beneath your body and the air on your skin, listen to surrounding sounds, and smell what is wafting from anything nearby.
- Shift your awareness so that you are open to what is around you, to things that are vast, impressively complex, unexpected, unexplainable, or that surprise and delight you.
- Take another deep breath in. Again, count to six as you inhale and seven as you exhale.
- Let your attention be open in exploration for what inspires awe. Is it a wide landscape? The tiny patterns of light and shadow? An appliance or piece of furniture? Let your attention move from the vast to the small.
- Let your inner voice ask far-fetched questions: What is new, unknown, or unexplored about what is around you?
- Continue your awe outing and, every so often, bring your attention back to your breath. Count to six as you inhale and seven as you exhale. Notice—really notice—the multitude of sights, sounds, smells, and other sensations that are dancing through your awareness that often go undetected or even suppressed.

Once you get in the habit of taking outings like this, you may be struck by how frequently you have opportunities to experience awe—they are practically infinite.

As you move through your day, take note of the moments that bring you wonder, give you goosebumps, or make your chest feel broader; these are your opportunities for awe. They may be in your neighborhood, in front of art, listening to music, or doing something together with other people. By seeking and noting your experiences of awe that stir humility and wonder, you may discover that they point you toward what you're supposed to do while you're here on Earth.

ASSIGNMENT: OPEN WRITING REFLECTION

Briefly describe the last three experiences in your life where you felt awe. Include details like where you were, whether you were with other people (who?) or alone, what time of day it was, what inspired awe, and how you felt in your body and mind. Then take the quiz at the following link: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/awe. Write down your score and a few ideas for what you could do to increase your levels of awe.