

SUMMER ADVENTURE OF EXPERIENCING AWE!

Research shows that people derive more lasting happiness from experiences than material purchases. The joy from experiences increases over time, while satisfaction from material goods often fades.

“The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.”

— **Eleanor Roosevelt**

“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead.”

— **Albert Einstein**

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and blue, dancing across a dark night sky. Below the lights, the dark silhouettes of a dense forest of evergreen trees are visible against the glowing backdrop.

AWE CAN BE A RESET BUTTON

Science shows that the feeling of awe promotes prosocial behavior. You are more likely to help others, feel less impatient and experience a "diminished self" in a healthy way because you realize that you are a small part of something bigger. You appreciate your surroundings as if looking at them for the first time. It is a feeling we get in the presence of something vast that challenges our understanding of the world, like looking up at millions of stars in the night sky, watching a sunset over the Grand Canyon or seeing an Olympian breaking a world record.

Awe is also found in everyday life – watching the leaves of a tree change from green to yellow or seeing a stranger give food to a person experiencing homelessness. Awe increases awareness and connection with nature and life around us.



KEY STRATEGIES TO CULTIVATE AWE

- **Take awe walks:** Walk in nature or a new environment specifically to notice things that move you, like trees, sunlight or vast landscapes.
- **Observe moral beauty:** Look for acts of kindness, courage or generosity in others.
- **Engage with the arts:** Listen to inspiring music, visit a museum or watch powerful performances to evoke emotions that trigger a sense of something greater.
- **Seek novelty and perspective:** Try new experiences, travel or look at the stars to feel a sense of vastness.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Unplug from devices, slow down and linger for a moment, allowing yourself to feel the sensation of wonder.
- **Keep an awe journal:** Document daily moments that inspire you, helping reinforce the experience.

To experience awe, deliberately seek out moments that challenge your perspective, such as engaging with nature, art or witnessing human kindness.




A HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Standing on a beach by the ocean evokes a unique sense of wonder. We still understand very little about the world beneath the surface; its power, immensity, unending view and the roar of the waves can trigger significant health benefits:

- **Reduced stress:** The sight of the ocean lowers stress hormones, while negative ions in the air boost serotonin.
- **Blue Mind state:** Looking at the ocean triggers a meditative, calm focus often described as a Blue Mind effect.
- **Perspective and humility:** The immense scale of the ocean helps shrink personal worries and provides a sense of connection to something larger than oneself.
- **Mental clarity:** The ocean provides a cognitive break from the overstimulation of daily life.
- **Physical connection:** The sensation of being near or in the water is a powerful, often therapeutic experience.
- **Increased altruism:** Experiences of awe make us kinder and more altruistic while reducing the tendency to ruminate.

In her TED Talk, “The power of feeling small: How awe and wonder sustain us,” Julia Baird explores how these experiences support our well-being. To gain a deeper understanding of the science of awe, watch the [full presentation](#).



When you are on vacation this summer, remember, when you open yourself to awe, astonishing things can happen. It could be in your own backyard, neighborhood park or gazing at the stars. You just need to pause, pay attention and allow yourself to experience the moment.

Resources:

<https://medium.com/@nawasiz>

<https://www.mybestself101.org/blog/inviting-awe-into-our-everyday-lives>

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/awe/definition>

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