



Be Peace. Choose Peace. Create Peace.

CHOOSE AWE CULTIVATION

What is Awe Cultivation?

Awe is the feeling that one may experience when in the presence of something larger than oneself. Experiencing awe produces salutary effects such as inner calm, the sense of interconnectedness, and the expansion of perspective. There are numerous ways to generate, increase, and reflect upon awe including viewing art, sensing nature, or visiting new places.

While the reason remains unknown as to why awe evolved, it is suggested that awe evolved because it prompted reverence and devotion to powerful leaders and promoted social cohesion. It has also been found that awe helped people identify safe places to seek shelter, such as environments that would have allowed hunter-gatherer to see approaching predators ¹

How do people learn Awe Cultivation?

It is easier to do so than not. Natural scenes are frequent awe elicitors, indicating that stimuli do not need to be physically large to elicit awe. There is the possibility of recalling spiritual and religious experiences, exploring the depths of nature, considering threats to one's life, as well as the "ultimate awe elicitor" of viewing the Earth from space, can evoke these feelings of awe. ²

How do people implement Awe Cultivation?

Awe can stem from any stimuli around us, meaning that anyone can find themselves in a place to implement awe. Some people are more frequently "awestruck" than others. There are factors that can possibly explain this difference that include one's personality, social class, religion, and culture. Those who are more open to new experiences may have a larger tendency to experience awe. On the other hand, people who are less comfortable with ambiguity appear to be less likely to experience the sensation of awe.³

For what types of circumstances is Awe Cultivation suited?

Awe Cultivation is well suited for developing positive social and emotional behaviors among people who use it.

Does Awe Cultivation work for preventing or controlling aggression or violence?

People experience negative affect, anxiety, and rumination, and engage in a variety of strategies in an attempt to manage the distress that life may bring. Awe is an emotion we feel that requires a perspective shift in order to accommodate the new experience. While working through these distresses, awe increases both well-being and patience, making it a good aspirant for an intervention to reduce the negative effects.⁴

¹Darwin, C. (1872). The expression of the emotions in man and animals. London, UK: John Marry, 374.

² Allen, S., Ph.D. (2018). The Science of Awe. *Executive Summary*.

³ Chirico, A., Yaden, D. B., Riva, G., & Gaggioli, A. (2016). The potential of virtual reality for the investigation of awe. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7(NOV), 1-6

⁴ Rudd, M., Vohs, K.D. and Aaker, J. (2012) Awe Expands People's Perception of Time, Alters Decision Making, and Enhances Well-Being. *Psychological Science*, 23, 1130-1136.



Where else might I go to learn more about Awe Cultivation?

- Suggestions from the Greater Good Science Center on [cultivating awe](#)
- How to go on an [Awe Walk](#)
- Why cultivating awe is great for your [mental health](#)

About Peace Through Action USA

Peace Through Action USA activates and equips Americans to implement practical peaceful solutions to aggression and violence in their communities and our country. We are a national-scope, charitable, social capital-building organization. Learn more at www.PeaceThroughAction.org.

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