

Awe as an intervention for Hypervigilant Nervous System States

When attention keeps scanning for what might go wrong, awe can offer a moment of wider perspective. Research links positive experiences of awe with reduced stress and less self-focused attention.

Eight sources of awe

The moral beauty of others

Witnessing exceptional kindness, courage, strength, or selflessness.

Collective effervescence

Sharing an uplifting experience or moving in unison: singing together, a concert, a sports crowd, or a shared ritual.

Nature

Taking in a landscape, the vastness of space, or the rhythms of the natural world. Sometimes a leaf or a patch of moss reminds us that we belong to a wider web of life.

Visual design and art

Encountering art, architecture, or human creations that surprise us, move us, or help us see something differently.

Music

Hearing a piece of music that moves us deeply. A voice or melody can open a moment of wonder.

Religion and spirituality

Experiencing a sense of the sacred, a mystical moment, or connection with the divine.

Big ideas and epiphanies

A sudden realization that changes how we understand something. Ideas from evolution or physics can make our familiar world feel larger.

The beginning and ending of life

Encountering birth, death, and the life cycle. These moments can bring us into contact with the mystery of being alive.

The beauty of it is that awe can be found in many places which makes it an easy on-ramp toward more joy. Start with what feels approachable, and let each small moment count.

Source for the eight categories Keltner, D. (2023). Awe: The new science of everyday wonder and how it can transform your life. Penguin Press.

Research context Monroy, M., & Keltner, D. (2023). Awe as a pathway to mental and physical health. doi.org/10.1177/17456916221094856