

Feeling BIG & small

Ever sat down with someone only to stand up feeling small? Occasionally, our interactions with colleagues, mentors, bosses, and others may leave us feeling like we don't measure up, that we haven't worked hard enough, that we don't know much, or that we aren't growing. Undoubtedly, we've made *others* feel small at times without realizing it. We may feel a tinge of embarrassment looking back on times when we boasted about some "no-big-deal" project we worked on, indulged in name dropping, or otherwise sought to boost our egos and make ourselves feel relevant, impressive...**BIG!**

Occasionally, there are refreshing instances when we meet people who are genuinely accomplished, yet we don't walk away from these encounters feeling diminished. People who are humble about their experiences and encourage others to see their potential tend to stand out in our memories because their confidence doesn't shake our own.

Like our waistlines, our egos can suffer from chronic over-feeding. "Diet and exercise" in this sense involves setting aside self-aggrandizement as a top priority, and trying some of the activities below:

Exercise humble curiosity. Approach others with a desire to understand them as human beings. Regardless of "power" differentials (with some reasonable caveats), approach others with the desire to build them up and support the good in their identity, intentions, and efforts.

Ask, "Do I sound like that?" Do you hate conversations where speakers rely on numbers, name dropping, or jargon to make points? People often rely on tactics like these when they don't understand the concepts they are trying to convey as well as they might like. In these instances, we can compassionately set aside our egos and/or need to knock an obnoxious other down a peg, and instead focus on how we can serve a flailing fellow human. Unless using names, numbers, or jargon in return is helpful, let's KNOCK IT OFF and reduce everyone's suffering.

Feeling small? Ask yourself "why?" Our egos deploy defensive countermeasures to save us from feeling small, or evade attacks from heat-seeking jerks. This figurative chaff and flare can act as signals or reminders that we shouldn't let others define us. In the face of real or imagined attacks on our delicate sense-of-self, we can be *extra* humble, quiet, and non-reactive. Your disarming self-assurance will help you walk away feeling bigger.

If we notice ourselves getting a bit "big for our britches", we can work to intentionally cultivate a sense of smallness. This will help us gain important perspective, greater peace, and free us and others to do amazing things!