

Oxford Ethical Leadership Programme

Date: 22 October 2023

The Oxford
Character
Project



www.oxfordcharacter.org



Objectives

Rethinking Leadership

1. Explore how character can support leadership
2. Share stories that have influenced your character & leadership

Leading with Character

1. Practice observing and identifying character
2. Reflect on personal character leadership
3. Exercise character using music
4. Write a letter to future self

**What is the most undervalued
quality of a good leader?**

How can we educate a new generation of wise thinkers and good leaders?

Introducing the Oxford Character Project

Founded in 2014, the Oxford Character Project is an interdisciplinary research project leading pioneering research on character and leadership in Oxford and beyond. Our mission is to build a generation of wise thinkers and good leaders.

We collaborate with a wide range of organisations and universities around the world to conduct cutting edge research and offer leadership development programmes to students and professionals.



What is Ethical Leadership?

Character

To talk about character is to talk about the deep dispositions at the centre of who we are that consistently shape the way we think, feel and act.

Our character is shaped by the patterns of life, the people around us, the stories we tell, the spaces we inhabit, the highs and lows of our experience.

Character is at the heart of what it means to be human.



Key components



The heart of character

Character has a **motivational** component. It is about our **aspiration** to be a certain kind of person – to live in accord with what matters to us and determine who we want to become.



The art of character

Character has a **skill** component. It is about successfully **acting** on our values and concerns, especially under pressure. Character can be developed over time by way of intentional practice.

Character core

ASPIRATIONS

- What matters to us
- Who we want to be
- Our identity (brand)



ACTIONS

- How we act
- How we think
- What we do

authentic
curious
collaboration
optimistic
courage
open-minded
purpose
fair
insightful
humility
love
justice
passionate
resilient
calm
integrity
responsible
adaptable
candid
self-aware
brave
patient
forgiving
grateful

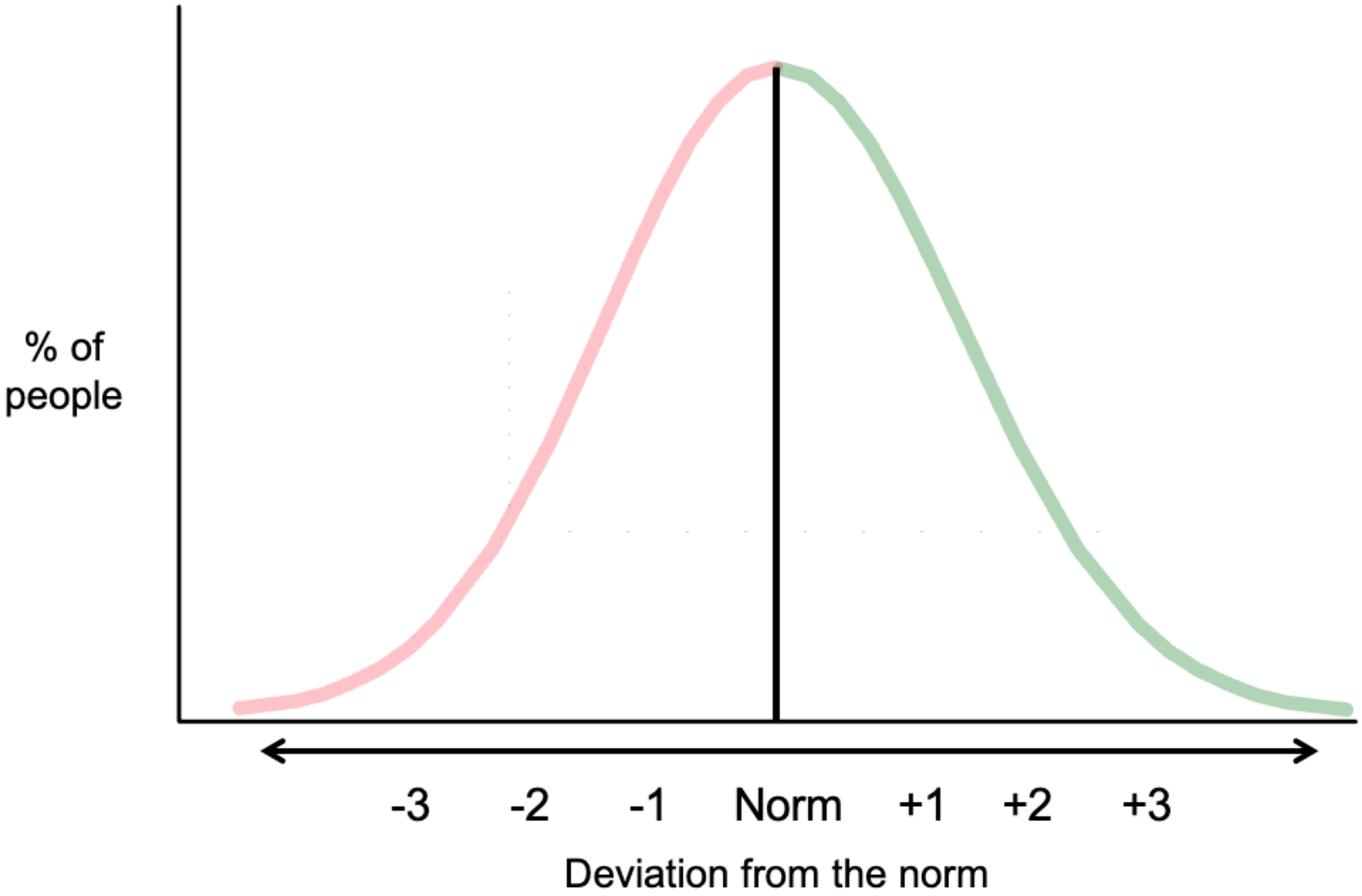
7 things to know about Character development

1. **Character is a mosaic of personal qualities** – it is made up of habits of thought and action
2. **Character changes over time** – it is malleable, not fixed
3. **Character involves choice and autonomy** – it is rational and free, not blindly conformist
4. **Character is social** – it is shaped within cultural contexts
5. **Character manifests principles and convictions** – it is related to questions of meaning and purpose
6. **Character involves effort** – it requires ongoing reflection and expression
7. **Character requires willpower** – it involves motivation as well as judgment

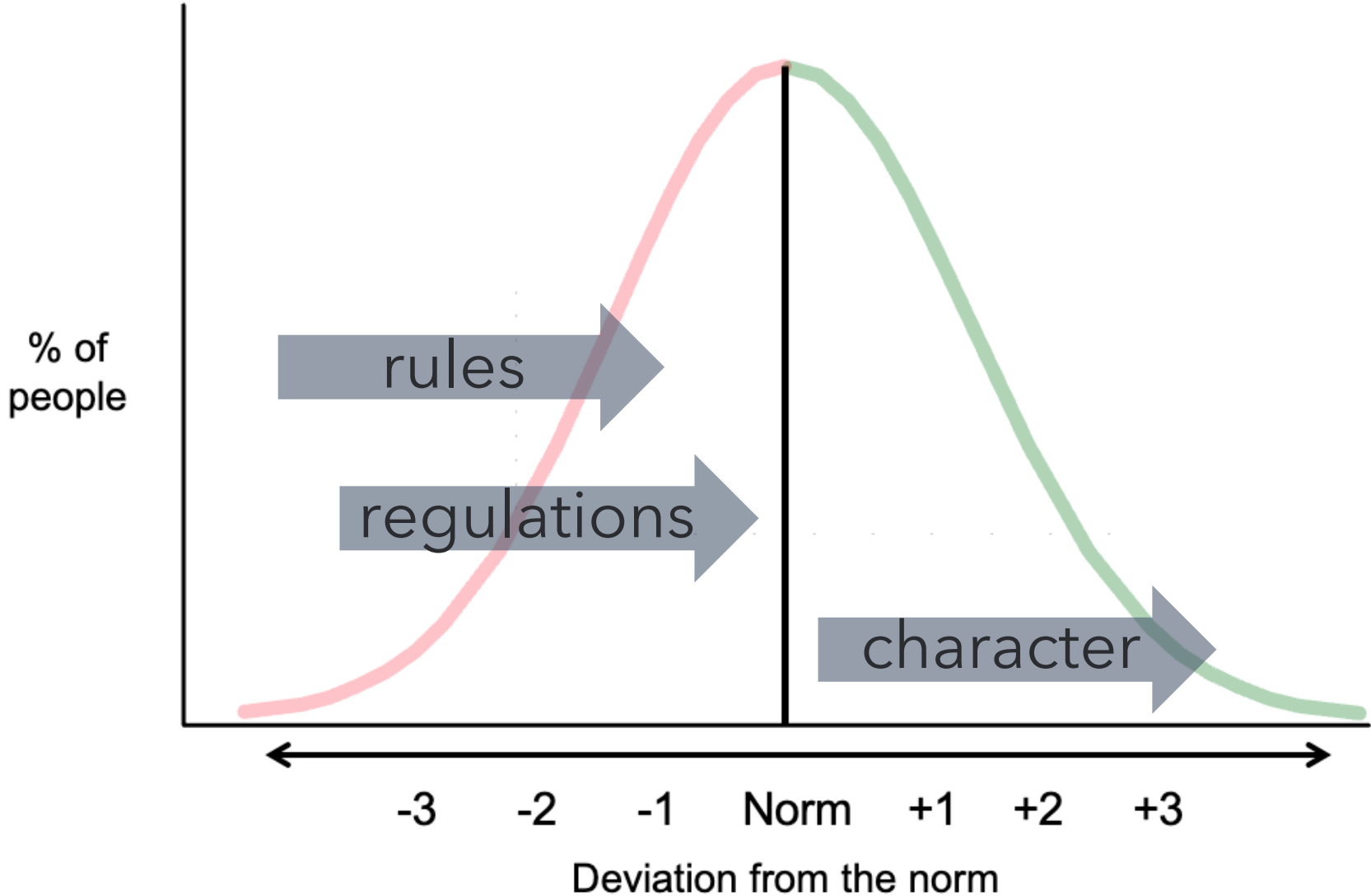
(Arthur, 2019)

What is the relationship between character and ethical leadership?

Ethics



Ethics



Why is it difficult to be an ethical leader?

7 strategies for character development

1. Habituation through practice
2. Engagement with virtuous exemplars
3. Reflection on experience
4. Dialogue that increases virtue literacy
5. Awareness of situational variables
6. Moral reminders
7. Friendships of mutual accountability



Lamb, M., Brant, J., & Brooks, E. (2021). How is virtue cultivated? Seven strategies for postgraduate character development. *Journal of Character Education*, 17:1, 81-108.

A scenic landscape featuring a large body of water in the foreground, densely populated with green lotus leaves and some pink flowers. In the middle ground, a traditional Chinese pavilion with a multi-tiered roof stands on the water's edge. The background shows rolling hills under a dramatic, cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise, with warm golden light filtering through the clouds. A solid green horizontal bar is located at the top left of the slide.

Stories of inspiration

Think of a leader who inspires you. It could be any real or fictional character – a public figure, someone in your family, or a character from a movie or a novel.

What makes you admire the person and why?

What does it say about you and your values?

Share your responses with your group and make a list of leadership qualities you aspire to develop.

Stories



Break

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Oxford Ethical Leadership Programme



Workshop #1: **Leading with purpose**



Workshop #2: **Leading for growth**



Workshop #3: **Leading with love**



Workshop #4: **Leading with integrity**



Workshop #5: **Leading with practical wisdom**



Workshop #6: **A lifetime practice**

How it works



LEARN

Reflect on the topic and make yourself familiar with the concepts using the pre-workshop resources
(30-60 minutes)



ENGAGE

Join a lively conversation with fellow scholars and exchange ideas to tackle the Ethical Leadership Challenge
(60 minutes)



PRACTICE

Take up the challenge and apply the lessons in your daily life to develop yourself as an ethical leader
(Ongoing)

What is virtue?

Confident



Unassured
(deficient)

Arrogant
(excess, unsupported)

Principled



Unprincipled
(deficient)

Dogmatic
(excess, unsupported)

Dimension	Deficient Vice	Virtue	Excess Vice
Accountability	Unaccepting Negligent Irresponsible Deflects	Accepts Consequences Conscientious Responsible Takes Ownership	Burdened Obsessive Controlling Can't delegate
Courage	Cowardice Unassured Hesitant Fragile Yielding	Brave Confident Determined Resilient Tenacious	Reckless Arrogant Bull-headed Overly-compensating Stubborn
Transcendence	Unthankful Unimaginative Short-sighted Uninspired Pessimistic Directionless	Appreciative Creative Future-Oriented Inspired Optimistic Purposeful	Awe-struck Untethered Missing the present Over-stimulated Delusional Fixated
Drive	Waits for direction Apathetic Aimless Mediocrity Lethargic	Demonstrates Initiative Passionate Results-Oriented Strives for Excellence Vigorous	Dictatorial Fanatical Tunnel-vision Strives for perfection Forceful
Collaboration	Confrontational Self-centered Inflexible Disconnected Narrow-minded	Collegial Cooperative Flexible Interconnected Open-Minded	People-pleaser Conflict-avoider Compliant Boundaryless Abstract
Humanity	Uncaring Oblivious to others Unrelatable Vindictive Aloof	Compassionate Considerate Empathetic Forgiving Magnanimous	Overly concerned Overly-accommodating Overwhelmed by feelings Exploitable Over-bearing
Humility	Fixed mindset Disinterested Ungrateful Braggard Unreflective Disrespectful Unaware Protective	Continuous Learner Curious Grateful Modest Reflective Respectful Self-aware Vulnerable	Lacking focus Transfixed Feeling insignificant Self-effacing Ruminating Fawning Self-conscious Over-exposed
Integrity	Fake Untruthful Inconsistent Unprincipled Manipulative	Authentic Candid Consistent Principled Transparent	Uncompromising Belligerent Rigid Dogmatic Indiscriminate
Temperance	Anxious Agitated Impatient Inattentive Rash	Calm Composed Patient Prudent Self-Controlled	Indifferent Detached Overly accepting Overly cautious Overly-regulating
Justice	Inequitable Biased Unfair Disproportionate Narrow concerns	Equitable Even-Handed Fair Proportionate Socially Responsible	No exceptions No differences "One size fits all" Micromanage proportion Paralyzed by complexity
Judgment	Stagnant Lacking logic Simplistic Lazy thinking Indecisive Lacking instinct Ignorant Unrealistic Oblivious	Adaptable Analytical Cognitively Complex Critical Thinker Decisive Intuitive Insightful Pragmatic Situationaly Aware	Overly malleable Over-analyzing Complicating Overly critical Impulsive Lacking reason Cunning Overly practical Over valuing situations

Virtues & Vices

Strives for Excellence



Mediocrity
(deficient)

Strives for Perfection
(excess, unsupported)

Humility
Temperance



The Perfect Hire for Community Management

by Burke Nielsen | Feb 8, 2017 | 6 comments



LAYOUT | FORMAT |



Which virtues & vices did you observe?

Deficient Vice	Virtue	Excess Vice
Directionless	Purposive	Fixated
Unthankful	Appreciative	Awe-struck
Unimaginative	Creative	Untethered
Short-sighted	Future-Oriented	Missing the present
Uninspired	Inspired	Over-stimulated
Pessimistic	Optimistic	Delusional

Crossan & Crossan, 2023

Which character behaviours need to be strengthened to shift the vices to virtues?

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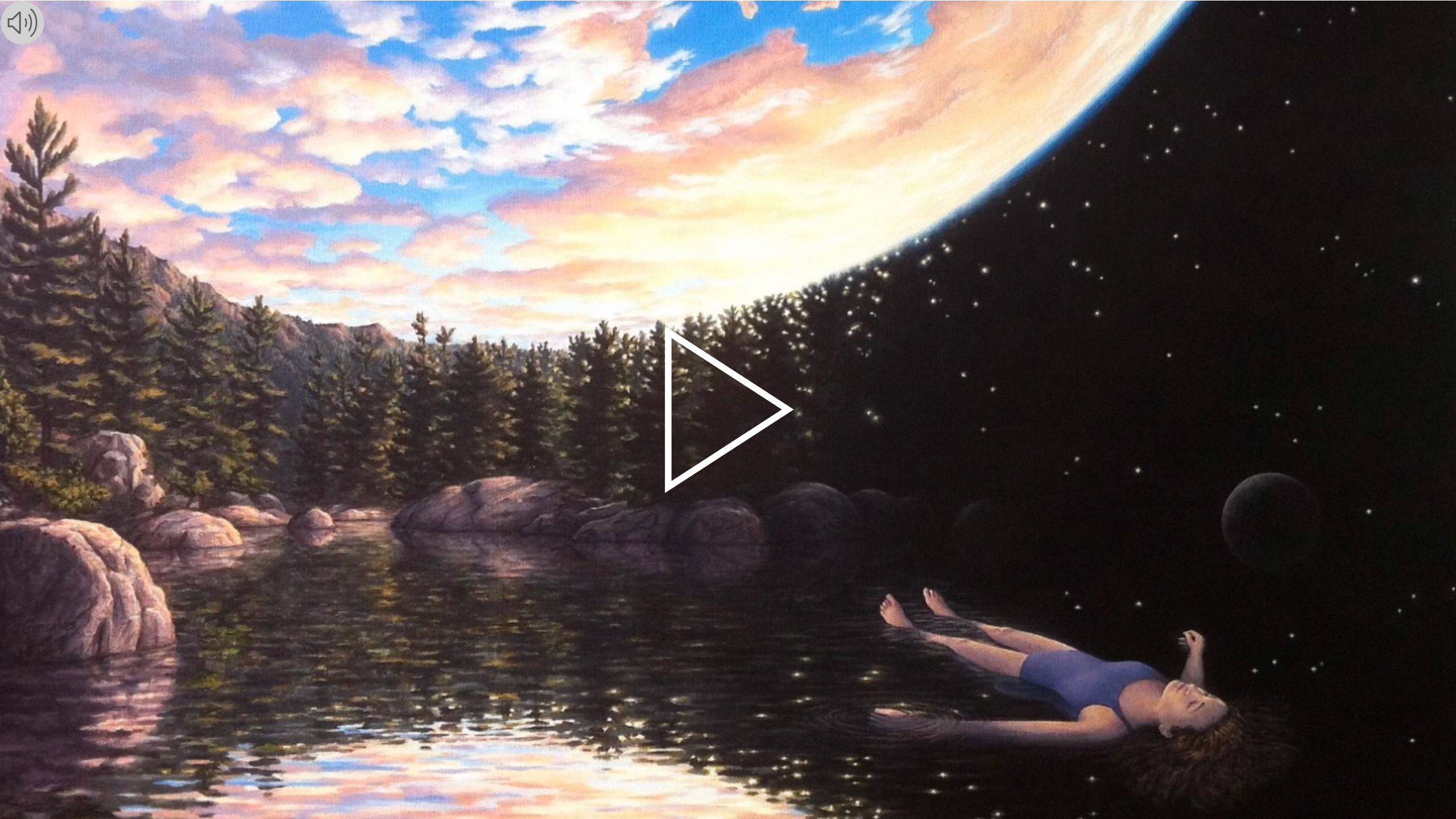
Connecting character to your life

1. Assess your virtues and vices – for each row, circle the behaviour you exhibit most frequently. Sliding scale is another option.

Who listens to music?

Music can be used as a stimulus to elicit a behavioural response





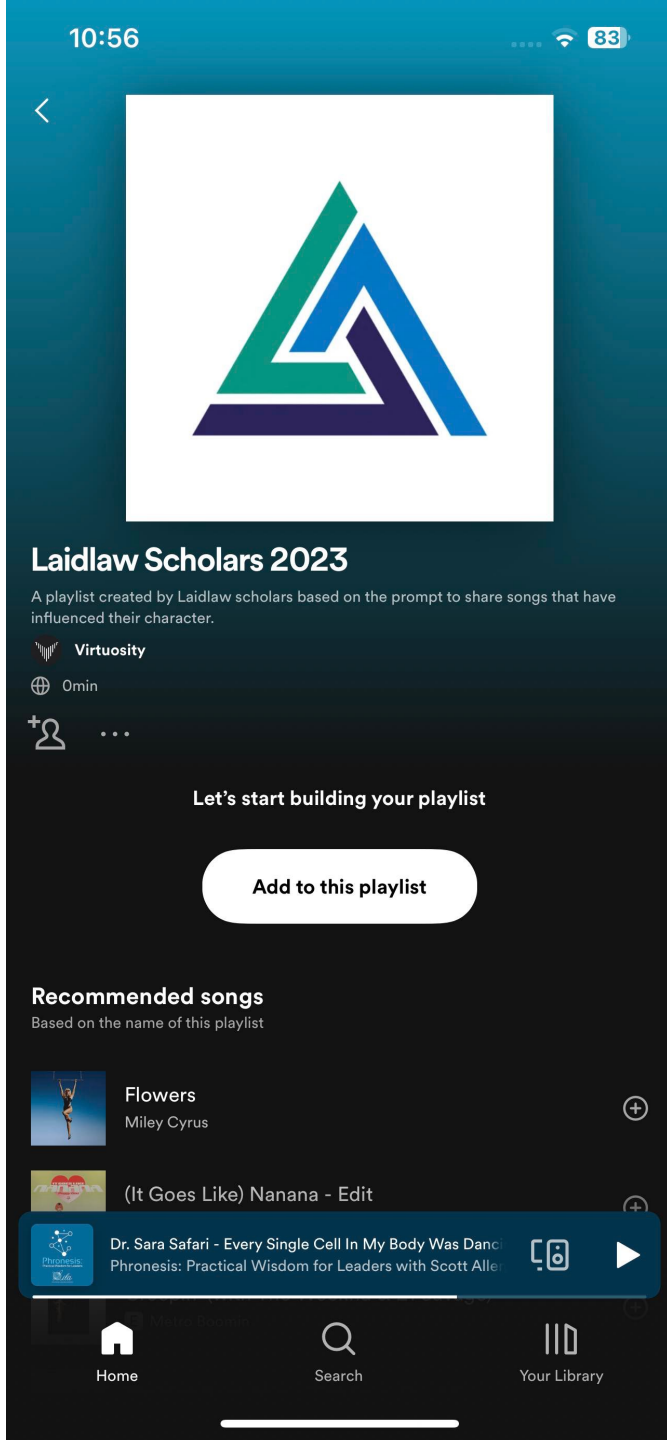
Music and Character

Think of a song that has influenced you in some way.

1. Do you have a particular experience you can associate with the song? Do you have a history/story with it? What is it about the tempo, lyrics, rhythm, genre etc. that captivates you?
2. What virtues were influenced by this music?



Crossan et al., 2017



Add your song

Letter to future self



Reflecting on what you have learned today, think about who you want to be **one year from now**.

If it helps, you may start by thinking about **achievements you want to accomplish**. Then ask yourself **who you want to be**, or need to be, to do the things you want to do.

Crossan, 2021

Learn more: <https://www.reflection.app/blog/writing-a-letter-to-my-future-self>

1

2

3

4

5

8

LETTER TO FUTURE SELF

I want to find more **joy** in the process of "getting things done". For example, as I continue to transition **my doctoral research**

into publications, I want to be **curious, playful**, and **learn from others** in the process of getting these "across the finish line".

11

12

15

18

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What's next?

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Thank You

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