



# **LITTLE HUMANIST GUIDE, WITHOUT PRETENSION AND WITHOUT DETOURS**



# INTRODUCTION

EDITION 1, MAY 2025

**Created by the Humanity Index, *Being Human* is a humanist social movement focused on simple, outward-looking behaviors. Its expression takes the form of a quick test made up of 14 questions suggesting 14 behaviors. For each one, we ask whether you are acting correctly or if you could do better.**

To take the test and get your evaluation:  
[humanityindex.ca/14-commitments-being-human-movement/](https://humanityindex.ca/14-commitments-being-human-movement/)



But how can we evaluate our behaviors in a more rational and less subjective way? What is “**correct**” or appropriate for each of these behaviors, and what is not?

So we designed a simple guide, unpretentious but straightforward, to help respond to the *Being Human* test more thoughtfully—and more importantly, to integrate some of its rules into our future behaviors.

It is now up to you to improve your humanist score by adopting a new behavior among the 14 proposed.

Humanity is us, together.  
[humanityindex.ca](https://humanityindex.ca)

# THE 14 BEHAVIORS

# 01



## I PROMOTE RESPECTFUL EXCHANGES ON VARIOUS COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS AND WITH OTHERS

**THIS BEHAVIOR REFERS TO THE CONCEPT OF CIVILITY, WHICH COULD BE SUMMED UP IN A FOUR-LETTER WORD: TONE, BOTH WRITTEN AND SPOKEN.**

**The tone you use can make a big difference in how your message is perceived.**

- So, re-read the last 25 messages you've sent, whether by text or email (and make sure they weren't all sent to the same person, of course).
- Also, recall your recent conversations—whether at work or in your personal life.
- Now try to re-read and re-hear them, but from the perspective of the people who received them.
- With a little hindsight, what feelings do those messages and conversations evoke in you?
- If some of those feelings are negative, could you have expressed the same things to those people using different words, phrasing, and a different tone?
- Did you do it consciously?
- Were you obliged to say certain potentially hurtful comments?

If the answer to QUESTION #1 of this test is **yes** for some of those messages or conversations, then check the box: **«I could do better.»**

# 02

## I MAKE DONATIONS ANNUALLY, WITHIN MY MEANS



Oh, and by the way! Giving to causes should also bring you joy—because we get more from giving than from receiving. That doesn't come from us. It's a universal principle with a name: the counter-gift.

**LET'S CLARIFY ONE THING. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP MANY PEOPLE FACE MAKES ANY CONTRIBUTION DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, REGARDLESS OF HOW WORTHY THE CAUSE MAY BE.**

**For everyone else, let's take a more mathematical approach to remove as much subjectivity as possible.**

- Take the amount shown on line 325 of your most recent tax return (total eligible donations).
- Reasonably increase this amount to include any one-time donations made during the year for which you didn't request a tax receipt (in-person solicitations, food drives, auctions, community events, office lotteries, etc.).
- Divide the resulting amount by the amount on line 199 of that same tax return (gross annual income).
- Multiply the result by 100 (a simple rule of three), and you will get a percentage representing the proportion of your donations in relation to your annual income.
- Apply the commonly known rule of 1 to 3% (a suggested guideline for evaluating the monetary value of annual donations).
- If this percentage is below 1%, you can do much better.
- If it falls within the lower half of the guideline (between 1% and 2%), it means there's still room for improvement.
- If it falls between 2% and 3%, it means your contributions to causes are adequate—but nothing stops you from giving more.

You can now answer **QUESTION #2** of the Being Human test—the one where many people realize they still have progress to make... like we all do, sometimes

# 03

## I MAKE MYSELF MORE AVAILABLE TO HELP



**YOU KNOW THE SAYING, “IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE, ASK A BUSY PERSON”?**

**Availability to help works like a muscle—the more you train it, the more it gives. So if someone asks you for a small favor or a helping hand, try not to immediately say you don’t have time before they’ve even finished asking.**

- Once the person has finished, take two or three seconds to consider their request.
- Take the time to properly assess the scope of what’s being asked and the relief your help could bring—while also recognizing that you can’t say yes to everything or constantly go against your own will. If your answer is yes, offer the help or do the favor without constantly complaining—otherwise, you lose all the credit. Worse, that attitude could create tension or even lead to conflict. Try instead to do it with a small smile.
- If your answer is no, say it calmly without spending ten minutes justifying yourself. That behavior often reflects our own guilt.
- But even better: be proactive. Pay attention and offer your help before the person has to ask. The positive impact will be even greater.

You can now answer QUESTION #3 of the Being Human test—the one where many people admit they could be doing just a little more.

# 04

## I ADOPT ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY BEHAVIORS



**WHEN IT COMES TO THE ENVIRONMENT, IT'S PERHAPS WHERE WE FEEL MOST POWERLESS—STRUGGLING TO BELIEVE THAT OUR SMALL INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS CAN TRULY MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

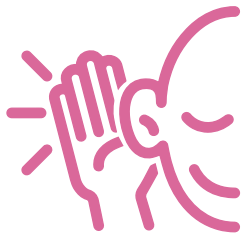
**In fact, among the 14 behaviors in the Being Human test, this is the second most common one where participants say they could do better.**

- First, stop looking at environmental issues through a magnifying glass. That perspective becomes an easy excuse to justify our shortcomings and to continually delay adopting eco-friendly habits.
- Instead, take a gradual approach by making a list of environmentally responsible behaviors and identifying the one that seems most achievable to you—the one that won't disrupt your routine too much.
- Having trouble creating that list? Just know it can start with things like reducing energy consumption, recycling, composting, using active or public transportation, buying eco-friendly products, and even your food and clothing choices.
- Choose one—just one—and commit to it. Stick with it until it becomes part of your routine.
- Once that behavior is fully integrated, start the process again with the next item on your list.
- Environmental health also depends on the accumulation of all our small individual actions.

With this awareness, you're now ready to answer [QUESTION #4](#).

# 05

## I STAY ATTENTIVE AND LISTEN TO OTHERS



**IN AN EGOCENTRIC WORLD THAT SPEAKS LOUDLY, MOVES QUICKLY, AND LISTENS LITTLE, CHOOSING TO OFFER A LISTENING EAR IS A POWERFUL ACT OF PRESENCE—OFTEN MORE COMFORTING THAN WE IMAGINE.**

**So, place a little less focus on yourself and a little more on those around you, both in your personal life and at work. Humility is a form of kindness.**

- Someone who wants to talk to you about something that's weighing on them is someone who values you—or sees you as someone with influence. Don't forget that.
- Use that influence, but in a positive way. Make the effort to take a few minutes to listen with genuine interest and sincerity.
- Remember that the primary purpose of being a good listener isn't to offer solutions, but simply to hear the person's story. Sometimes the solution lies in just being heard.
- Understand that offering a listening ear to someone in need is, above all, a way to show them respect and consideration—the very first thing every human being seeks, consciously or not.

The next step is yours. So is [QUESTION #5](#) of the Being Human test. By being more attentive to others, you always come out ahead—because you've created, repaired, or strengthened a connection.

# 06

## I CHALLENGE MY BIASES EVERY DAY



**PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO BIASES DO NOT EXIST. THAT'S EXACTLY WHY WE MUST CONSTANTLY CHALLENGE THEM. A BIAS BEGINS THE MOMENT WE LABEL SOMEONE. WE ALL CARRY LABELS, BUT SOME ARE HARDER TO BEAR THAN OTHERS.**

**So first, recognize the main biases you hold—because you likely have more than one.**

- To guide your reflection, remember that a bias is a belief or preconceived opinion, without real foundation, adopted without examination or imposed by one's environment, upbringing, beliefs, or the times we live in.
- When you're confronted with your own biases, try to deconstruct them by admitting your judgment is probably skewed and may be misleading. Give people a fair chance.
- Every time you're about to express a value judgment, take a second or two to think about it.
- Ask yourself whether you're contributing to the reinforcement of a bias.
- If so, reframe your judgment in a way that doesn't harm the person or group involved. Sometimes, it's okay to hold back a little.
- It's the constant repetition of our biases that makes them so persistent.

Is [QUESTION #6](#) a bit clearer now? Just goes to show—taking a step back really can help us see things differently.



# 07

## I SUPPORT LOCAL CULTURES AND PRODUCTS



**CULTURE EXPRESSES ITSELF IN COUNTLESS WAYS AND IS REFLECTED IN OUR ACHIEVEMENTS—WHETHER ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL, COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS-RELATED, CULINARY, FASHION-RELATED, OR OTHERS. THESE CONTRIBUTE TO DEFINING WHO WE ARE AND ALSO FUEL OUR ECONOMY.**

**So, take a brief look back at your purchasing behaviors over the past few months, both online and in-person.**

- Try to identify which organizations benefited most from those purchases.
- Could you have supported a local merchant... or did you just use them to validate a purchase you ended up making online, elsewhere?
- Could an equivalent product made in your province or Canada have done the trick?
- Have Amazon, Costco, and Walmart become your only suppliers?
- And what about all those artisans, shop owners, creators, designers, and local producers—do you ever take an interest in them?
- Ah! It's more expensive. I understand. But the money saved individually, multiplied by the savings made by millions of people individually, ends up costing us a lot collectively. Supporting local businesses, from time to time, is truly priceless.

QUESTION #7 is now in your hands.

# 08

## I EMBRACE A CAUSE, NO MATTER HOW SMALL



**THERE ARE SAID TO BE 86,000 REGISTERED CHARITIES IN CANADA. SO, THERE'S CERTAINLY NO SHORTAGE OF OPTIONS.**

**But don't panic. Forget those thousands of potential causes for a moment. Instead, ask yourself how you could be more helpful. Often, it's by using our skills, our experiences, or our passions.**

- Please understand that the cause you may be interested in does not need to be part of this list of 86,000 organizations.
- Just look around you. The cause might be right in your own backyard, taking an unexpected form.
- It could be a small organization in your neighborhood, your local community center, a lonely senior, a struggling young person, or even a family member. No matter what it is, all causes are worthy when it comes time to help.
- And if no cause speaks to you, create your own, no matter how small, and bring it to life. It doesn't need to be official or registered—it can simply exist through you.
- Also, try to get involved out of conviction rather than obligation—it's far more fulfilling. Obligation tends to come with pressure that can feel heavy.
- Know this: people who feel useful are generally happier than those who don't. A sense of purpose feeds both the heart and the mind.

Ready now to answer [QUESTION #8?](#)

# 09



## I HONOR MY COMMITMENTS, BIG AND SMALL

**FAILING TO KEEP OUR COMMITMENTS—EVEN THOSE WE CONSIDER MINOR—HAS BECOME AN UNFORTUNATE TREND, OFTEN LEADING TO MISUNDERSTANDINGS, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND EVEN CONFLICT.**

**Remember the well-known saying: “If you say it, do it.” It’s better to refrain and skip your turn than to make a promise just to keep the peace, only to break it later.**

- Being reminded of a commitment is unpleasant—for both the person reminding and the one being reminded.
- Take your commitments seriously, even the smallest ones. People are counting on you. Children are especially sensitive to this.
- If you’re unsure or hesitant, wait and take the time to think before making a promise. No one likes to disappoint.
- Manage people’s expectations by being upfront about your limitations and constraints.
- And if a commitment turns out to be unfeasible, regardless of the reasons or circumstances, don’t let the situation drag on. Out of respect, face the reality and take responsibility. It’s always better to act early than too late.

Now it’s your turn to take on [QUESTION #9](#).

# 10

## I DO A GOOD DEED WHENEVER THE OPPORTUNITY ARISES



**MANY PEOPLE WHO FALL ASLEEP EASILY SHARE THEIR SECRET: “WHEN I GO TO BED, I THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE I WAS SOMEHOW HELPFUL TO DURING THE DAY.”**

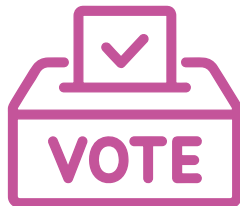
**For this question, many people admit—without much embarrassment—that they could be doing a little more. What if you started tonight?**

- Begin by recognizing the moments where you could be more helpful or kind. A person who isn't looking to be useful won't see these opportunities—or will see them and simply ignore them.
- Be attentive. Remember that doing a good deed often means doing very small things that look more like gestures of kindness than actual services.
- Know that these good deeds, done completely free of charge, are often for strangers you've never seen before—and likely will never see again.
- Some of these actions will take just a few seconds of your time, others a few minutes. It's really not the end of the world.
- These small acts often lead people to say, “Thank you, sir/ma'am, you made my day.” And in doing so, you probably made your own day too.
- The spontaneity and generosity of a kind act greatly amplifies its impact on the person receiving it.
- We'll say it again: people who feel useful in their daily lives are often the happiest. That's no coincidence.

So, for [QUESTION #10](#)—are you doing enough, or could you do better?

# 11

## I FULFILL MY CIVIC DUTY BY VOTING



**IN THE LAST ELECTIONS IN CANADA IN 2021, THE VOTER TURNOUT WAS 63%. THIS CLEARLY SHOWS THAT EXERCISING ONE'S CIVIC DUTY IS NOT SOMETHING EVERYONE TAKES TO HEART.**

**There's always a reason or an excuse not to vote—  
but let's be honest, those reasons are rarely valid.**

- In all the provinces of Canada, unlike in the United States, we're fortunate to have several official parties to choose from, which offers some protection against political polarization.
- Municipal politics also offers a wide range of political options, giving people the opportunity to express their choices and opinions.
- Among the 14 dimensions that shape how we perceive our humanity, democracy ranks second—highlighting just how important it is to our vision of living together in society.
- Of course, just like with the environment or other humanistic values, it's easy to doubt the power of your individual actions. It's tempting to step back, to let others take care of it... and then criticize them afterward. Is that your case?

Now it's your turn to answer QUESTION #11—  
because staying on the sidelines is silencing your voice.

# 12

## I RECOGNIZE AND HIGHLIGHT THE GOOD DEEDS OF OTHERS



**RECOGNITION—ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL CONTRIBUTORS TO HAPPINESS, YET UNFORTUNATELY, ONE OF THE HARDEST TO EXPRESS. IT'S AS IF ACKNOWLEDGING OTHERS' GOOD ACTIONS SOMEHOW TAKES SOMETHING AWAY FROM US OR DIMINISHES US. AND YET!**

**This reality applies just as much to our personal lives as it does to our professional lives.**

- Be humble. Recognition requires a certain humility from those who give it, because it shifts the spotlight onto someone else.
- Understand that the great impact of recognition lies precisely in the fact that it comes from others.
- It's also important to realize that recognition is not one-directional, especially in the workplace. It doesn't necessarily come from "above," but can come from all directions. Recognition is horizontal.
- Instead of envying those who are often acknowledged for their good actions, observe them—and let them inspire you.
- Remember: expressing recognition costs you nothing and takes nothing away from you—on the contrary, it gives.

QUESTION #12 is far from trivial. It touches on something essential.

# 13

## I USE THE WORDS «HELLO» AND «THANK YOU» GENEROUSLY



**TWO WORDS—JUST TWO SIMPLE WORDS—  
THAT CAN SHIFT AN EXCHANGE FROM WARM TO COLD,  
FROM RESPECTFUL TO ABRUPT.**

**Sometimes we lose sight of the most basic courtesies.**

- Do the same exercise you did for the very first question in this guide with your emails, texts, and conversations—whether by phone or in person.
- Re-read or recall them, checking whether you greeted your conversation partner at the beginning and end, and whether you said thank you, if it was appropriate.
- The immediacy of electronic communication seems to have made basic courtesies like greetings and thanks disappear—but even these quick exchanges are still person-to-person communication. We do notice how they're delivered.
- Don't assume that basic greetings are no longer necessary in digital conversations. That's a mistake. Do you ever receive emails with no greeting or closing? Do you enjoy those messages?
- Starting a message with "hello" takes three seconds. Ending it with "thank you" takes just as little. Is your time really so precious and your schedule so packed that you need to save those few seconds?
- In person, aim to create real contact. Greet the person sincerely, looking them in the eye—not around the room. The same goes for saying thank you.

QUESTION #13 is just a friendly reminder—because sometimes, we forget.

# 14

## I OFTEN REFLECT ON THE IMPACT OF MY ACTIONS ON OTHERS



**IF THE PREVIOUS QUESTION WAS THE MOST BASIC IN THE BEING HUMAN TEST, THIS ONE IS PROBABLY THE MOST DELICATE. IT REQUIRES DEEPER INTROSPECTION—AND ABOVE ALL, A GOOD DOSE OF HUMILITY—BECAUSE IT DIRECTLY TOUCHES ON SELFISHNESS.**

**Selfishness:** *“To be concerned only with one’s own interests or pleasure, without considering the interests or needs of others.”* Here, it’s important to interpret the word “others” as broadly as possible.

- From time to time, take a moment to ask yourself if this definition sometimes—or maybe too often—applies to you. If so, don’t panic. You’re not alone. Over a third of respondents to the Being Human test admit that they could do better on this question.
- Ask yourself whether you’re truly aware of the needs and interests of those around you.
- If you’re unsure, check with the people concerned.
- Once you’ve made it through this tough first step, it’s time to act—by being more attentive to others’ needs and interests. In this game, there are no losers.
- And if you need one more reason to reflect on this, know that people who lean toward selfishness also tend to perceive their own humanity less clearly.

QUESTION #14, the final one in this little test, is now in your hands. It’s your turn to act one last time.





