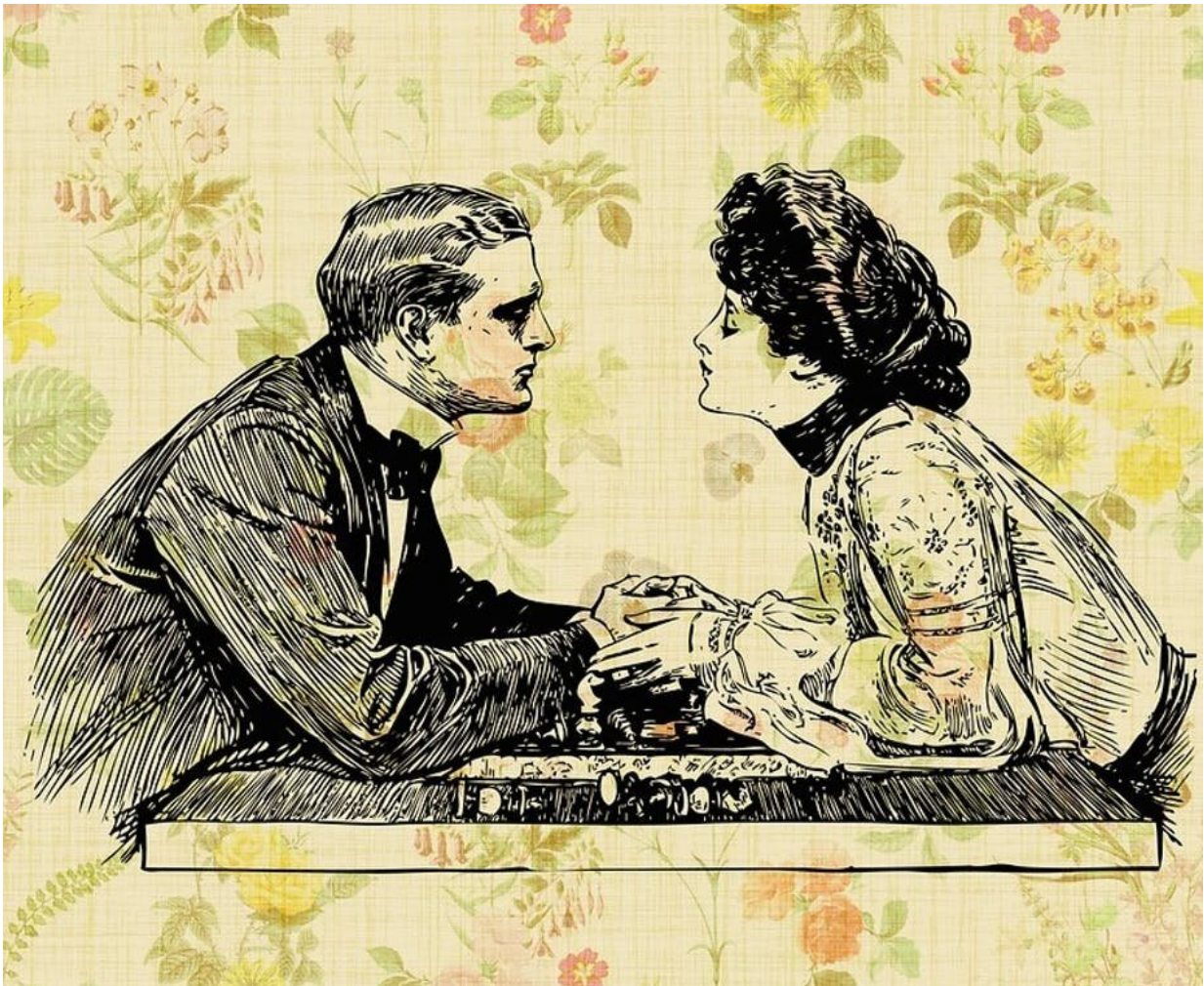


This trait could be key to a lasting romance

February 14 2019, by Toni Antonucci, Kristine J. Ajrouch And Noah J. Webster



‘I’m not perfect – and I know you aren’t, either.’ Credit: [Pixabay](#)

Passion and commitment are widely believed to be the foundation of strong romantic relationships.

But a relationship is made of two unique individuals, and [personality traits](#) these individuals possess or lack can often make a relationship more likely to endure.

In a [recent study](#), we found that one trait in particular – humility – is an important indicator of successful relationships.

An honest view of shortcomings

Humility can sometimes be confused with [low self-esteem](#), low confidence or meekness.

But researchers [have come to realize](#) that being humble generally indicates the presence of deeply admirable personal qualities. It means you have the ability to accurately assess your deficiencies without denying your skills and strengths.

For example, you might recognize that you're smart but realize it would be absurd to call yourself all-knowing – especially when the scope of human knowledge is so vast. This is an honest and sober view of your shortcomings.

As the philosopher Jason Baehr [has argued](#), "To be humble is to be attentive to and disposed to 'own' one's limitations, weaknesses, and mistakes. A humble person does not ignore, avoid, or try to deny her limits or deficiencies."

If you're humble, you lack a host of negative qualities, such as arrogance and overconfidence. It means you can acknowledge mistakes, see value in things that are riddled with imperfections and identify areas for

improvement.

The link between humility and forgiveness

Humility appears to be a huge asset to relationships. [One study](#) found that people tend to rate this quality highly in their significant other. It also found that someone who is humble is more likely to initiate a romantic relationship, perhaps because they're less likely to see themselves as "too good" for someone else.

But in our study, we wanted to explore the link between humility and forgiveness in couples.

Humility is tricky to measure; we worried that people who were arrogant might presumptuously declare their humility, while people who were actually humble would, as a sign of their humility, downplay this trait.

So we approached this question by asking each [partner](#) in a romantic relationship about their own and their partner's humility. We hoped that even if a truly humble person didn't consider themselves humble, at least their partner would recognize this trait.

We asked 284 couples from the Detroit metropolitan area questions about how humble they were, how humble they thought their partner was and if they were likely to forgive their partner if they did something that was hurtful, like insulting them.

We found that people who felt their partner or spouse was humble were more likely to forgive them following a hurtful situation. This wasn't true, however, of those who felt their partner or spouse was arrogant. Many of our respondents with arrogant partners indicated that because their partners were less likely to admit to any personal failings, they were less likely forgive them.

Interestingly, the strength of an individual's social network can play a role too. If someone has a humble partner, they're more likely to forgive that person. If someone has a lot of close, supportive friends and a humble partner, they'll be even more likely to forgive that partner after he or she has screwed up. But if your partner is arrogant, it doesn't matter how many great friends the couple has, they'll still be less likely to be forgiven.

The ability to forgive is so important because pain is an inevitable part of any [relationship](#). People mess up. They might say something they don't mean, be unknowingly inconsiderate or forget an important event. So when looking for a partner, it's probably a good idea to find someone who recognizes that making mistakes is part of being human.

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