2.Lingoda

Humans and our flaws

LEVEL
Upper-Intermediate (B2)

NUMBER
EN_B2_1071R

LANGUAGE
English

Learning outcomes

- I can read a text about humans and our flaws and understand its main points.

- I can give my opinion as to whether I think human beings are selfish or not.
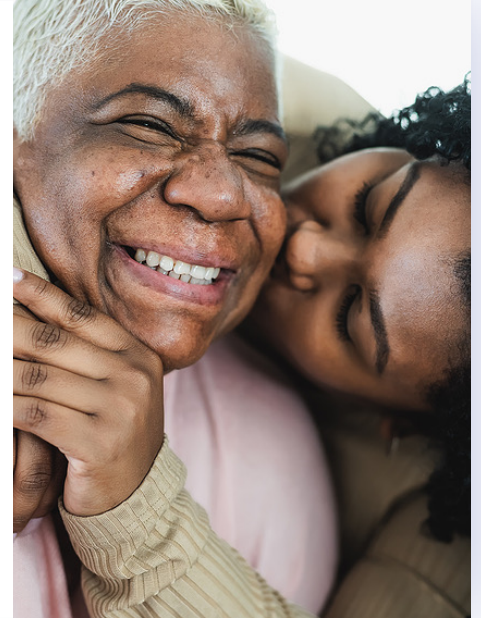
What is a synonym for the word 'flaw'?

Share some ideas!

What human flaws exist?

Despite our **capacity** for love, **innovation**, creativity and logic, humans have flaws. These flaws are deeply **wired into** our nature. By **contrast**, machines seem perfect in nature, but may **lack** some of our most **distinctive** yet human **traits**.

Literature and culture are full of stories exploring the **shortcomings inherent** to human nature. It seems that no matter how **ambitious**, intelligent or caring we are, the **fatal** flaws in our design will always exist.

1. How does the text compare humans with machines?

What human flaws exist?

Arrogance, **dishonesty**, **conceit** and **stubbornness** are all examples of human **vice**. People have the capacity to severely hurt others through their own **fixation** on the self.

Machines do not suffer from the same **selfishness**. In their **clarity** of programming, they can **reveal** the extent of **human imperfection**. Yet machines can also make mistakes and one with **a flawed** design has a frighteningly large **potential** for disaster.

2. What are some examples of human vices mentioned in the article?
3. How are machine flaws different from human flaws?

Discuss

in **breakout rooms** or **together as a class**.

Can you think of a character from a film or TV programme with major flaws?

How did their actions demonstrate those flaws?

What human flaws exist?

Human **greed** - the selfish **desire** for more of something than is required – is not only **immoral** but also damaging to our long-term **prospects** on the planet. As the 2008 financial collapse showed, even having it all is not enough. Humans have a **fundamental** urge to desire more, and unfortunately our social and **economic** climate does nothing but celebrate this fatal human flaw.

1. What does the author see as an essential human urge?
2. How would you describe the author's attitude towards this urge?

What human flaws exist?

Greed and self-interest can push an individual and inspire them to achieve more. This desire to **acquire** more, however, can never be satisfied. What's more, while greed may benefit the individual, for society it can be extremely **destructive**.

With only so many **resources** to go around, individual greed **decreases** the quality of life for the **majority**. A desire for more can only increase the gap between those with the most and those with the least.

3. What impact does greed have on us as individuals?
4. How does greed affect society, according to the text?

Read the quotations

1

> **Greed is good. It leads humans to perform at their best and be ambitious.**
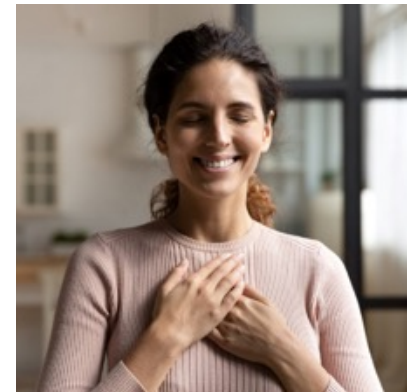
2

> **Greed is natural. Humans have always been greedy and that will never change.**

Do you agree or disagree with them?
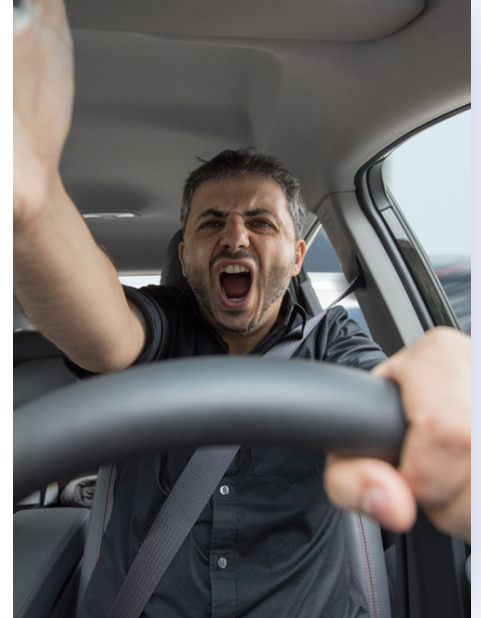
Is greed inherent or learnt?

How can we become 'less' greedy?

What human flaws exist?

Human **selfishness** is easy to understand. Many say that at the end of the day we are animals who are **primarily** concerned with ourselves and our own **survival**.

Much of our **evolution** has promoted selfish behaviour and this comes from a deeply ingrained instinct for **survival**. Most of the time it is human nature to act **primarily** out of one's own interest.
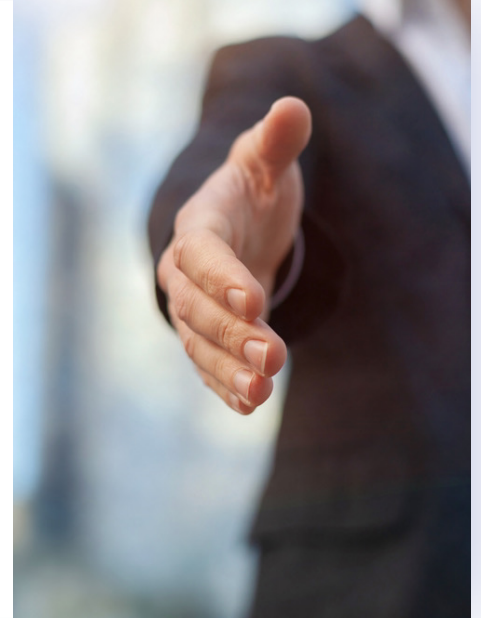

1. What explanation does the text give for us being selfish?

What human flaws exist?

Selfishness can seem to be everywhere. Small examples – a man pushing in front of you at the supermarket – can only highlight this **flaw**.

Studies have shown that humans place a high value on traits like **honesty**, **forgiveness**, **justice** and **helpfulness**. Despite this, people can appear extremely selfish in their behaviour at times.

2. How does the author compare what humans believe with how we behave?

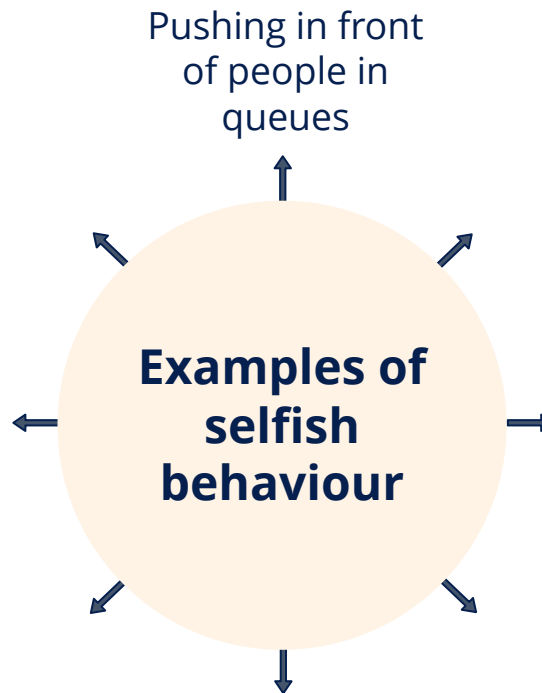It's a **dog-eat-dog** world out there!

This phrase means ***highly competitive*** and that people will do anything it takes to be successful.

Brainstorm

Write down examples of selfish behaviour.

Pushing in front of people in queues

Examples of selfish behaviour

What human flaws exist?

Humans are among the most **complex** creatures on the planet, and **understandably** full of **contradictions**. Humans have a **unique flexibility** in that, despite our flaws, we can act on and express our values.

Our flaws, as well as our ability to overcome them, **differentiate** us from machines. They also are what make us most inherently human.

1. In the end, what makes humans inherently special according to the author?

Write a short paragraph

1. **Read** the quotation below.
2. **Write** 50-80 words explaining whether you agree or disagree.
3. **Share** your work with the class.

"Our greatest flaw as human beings is that we are all inherently selfish."

Let's reflect

- Can you read a text about humans and our flaws and understand its main points?

- Can you give your opinion as to whether you think human beings are selfish or not?

Your teacher will now make one suggestion for improvement for each student.

End of the lesson

Idiom

to have a heart of gold

Meaning: to be a very kind person.

Example: John **has a heart of gold**; he can't do enough for you. What a great human being!

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Additional practice

Choose two flaws

Explain in your own words how you think they affect us as individuals.

Arrogance	Dishonesty
Greed	Selfishness

Discuss

Which of the 4 flaws do you consider the worst?

Do you think any of the flaws can ever be positive traits?

Read the quotation

> **" Studies have shown humans place a high value on traits like honesty, forgiveness, justice and helpfulness.**

What traits do you value most in a person?

Why are they important to you?

Who is someone you know who represents those values?

Answer key

P. 4-5: 1. Humans are creative and loving; machines are not. Humans have obvious flaws; machines appear not to have flaws.

2. Arrogance, dishonesty, conceit and stubbornness.

3. Machine flaws do not come from selfishness, rather from design. They also have the potential to be more damaging than human errors.

P. 7-8: 1. A selfish desire for more i.e. greed.

2. Negative – they describe it as 'immoral'.

3. Greed can push us as individuals to do more.

4. Greed results in more inequality and increases the gap between rich and poor.

P. 10-11: 1. It comes from an ingrained survival instinct.

2. The author states that humour value selflessness but behave selfishly.

P. 14: 1. Our flexibility to act on and express our values is what makes humans special.

Summary

Humans and our flaws
- *flaw; arrogance; dishonesty; conceit; stubbornness; selfishness.*
- *greed; immoral; to acquire; destructive.*
- ***Greed** may benefit the individual, but for society it can be extremely **destructive**.*

Humans and our positive traits
- *innovation; honesty; forgiveness; justice; helpfulness;*
- *complex; contradictions; flexibility; to differentiate (from)*
- *Our flaws, as well as our ability to overcome them, **differentiate** us from machines*

Vocabulary

flaw

arrogance

dishonesty

conceit

stubbornness

selfishness

greed

immoral

to acquire

destructive

innovation

honesty

forgiveness

justice

helpfulness

complex

contradictions

flexibility

to differentiate (from)

Notes