



# 5 Ways to Be the Patient Person You Never Thought You Could Be

Patience is a skill. Hone your craft with these tips.

Patty Onderko May 29, 2017

Certain attributes—such as [grit](#), [gratitude](#) and [resilience](#)—have risen out of positive psychology research as traits to cultivate for maximum well-being. We imagine them as singular qualities to be worked on one at a time and added to our personal stockpile of weapons against negativity. But of course, all of these characteristics work together. Focus on awe, and you're very likely to become more grateful. Strengthen your self-compassion, and your resilience is bound to increase, too.

One virtue can serve as a gateway to the others: patience. As a stand-alone positive psychology buzzword, it's not as beefy as gratitude and resilience. Studies haven't borne out the connection between patience and well-being as strongly as they have with curiosity and [creativity](#). But patience is so tightly knit into the fabric of these other qualities that it's hard to tell whether it's the cause or effect, says Bernard Golden, Ph.D., a psychologist in Chicago and author of [Overcoming Destructive Anger](#) and [Unlock Your Creative Genius](#).

As a positivity portal, patience is ideal. Patience-building strategies can feel more accessible than those for the more erudite and elusive awe, for example. If you can count your breaths, you can work on your patience. Plus, practicing patience has an immediate, in-the-moment payoff. You can curtail anger, lower stress, and avoid and resolve conflicts.

One of the keys is to slow your temper. “Quick-tempered people assume that they are hardwired to be that way,” says Daniel H. Gallagher, Ph.D., a psychologist in Maplewood, New Jersey. But that’s not true. “Research has shown us that calming exercises such as deep breathing can change one’s physiological response to a situation and allow clearer thinking,” he says. Your brain can better engage its executive functioning areas—and come up with sensible solutions—when it isn’t clouded by the anger and anxiety that impatience breeds. So, don’t hide behind being a “hot-blooded” person. [You can cool down](#) with the tips below.

## 1. Breathe.

If you feel yourself getting impatient, take three or four slow, deep breaths, suggests Golden. Exhale for twice as long as you inhale.

## 2. Contract and relax.

Progressive relaxation exercises—in which you systematically tense and then release one muscle group at a time—can [stop your stress response](#) before it takes over your entire body. Waiting in an infuriatingly long line? Tense your toes for five seconds, then your calves, and so on all the way up to your forehead.

## 3. Manage your expectations.

Recognize when your emotional brain is influencing your expectations of a situation in the form of hopes and wishes, says Golden. “You may know that traffic is congested during rush hour, yet you still expect the roads to be clear,” leading to massive irritation, he says. Allow extra time for your commute, and you will feel calmer.

## 4. Practice meditation and mindfulness.

A few minutes of meditation a day can reboot your brain and improve your outlook. Don't know how to meditate? Download an app that guides you through the process. We love [Calm](#), [Headspace](#) and [Bhuddify](#).

## 5. Make a connection.

Are you in the serpentine security line at the airport and feeling yourself getting increasingly annoyed? Make a joke about it with the person in front of you. Getting out of your own head and sharing the experience with someone else always diminishes frustration. And social interactions allow you to recognize others as fellow humans rather than obstacles in your way.

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