

## WHAT IS HUMANISM?

**HUMANISM IS A NON-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW OR APPROACH TO LIFE SHARED BY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN THE UK AND AROUND THE WORLD.**

Humanists believe it is possible to lead a good, happy, and meaningful life without the need for religion.

**The Happy Human** is a symbol used by humanist organisations all over the world. It represents a celebration of being human – celebrating what human beings can do and celebrating that we can be happy.



## HUMANIST HISTORY

Humanism is different from many religions in that it does not have a founding figure. Many people in history from different places around the world have tried to answer big questions from a non-religious perspective. Many of these have influenced modern humanism. Humanist thinking can be found over 2,000 years ago in ancient India, China, and Greece. Humanist ideas became increasingly popular during a period called the Enlightenment in the 18th century.



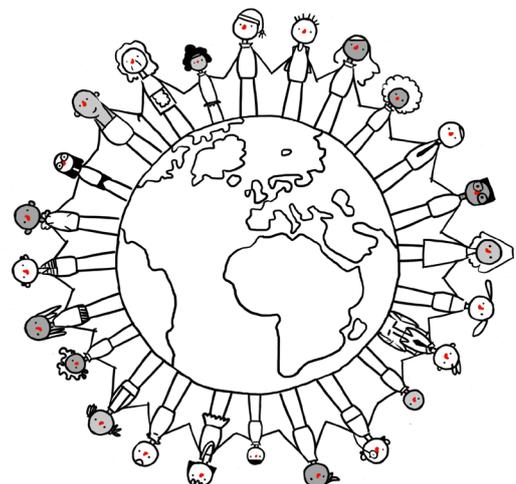
“For as long as there have been human beings, there have been non-religious people whose view of the world can be described as ‘humanist’: informed by **evidence**, inspired by **empathy**, and infused with **hope** and **wonder** for the world around us.”

**ANDREW COPSON**,  
Chief Executive,  
Humanists UK



## HOW MANY HUMANISTS ARE THERE?

In the UK, around 5% of people (one in 20) use the label ‘humanist’ to describe themselves. However, many more share humanist beliefs and values. Humanists and humanist organisations can be found all around the world – in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas.



# FIVE COMMON FEATURES OF A HUMANIST APPROACH TO LIFE



**1** Humanists believe human beings **evolved** naturally. We have many abilities and, if we put them to good use, we have the **potential** to lead good and happy lives.



**2** Humanists believe the world is a **natural** place with no supernatural side (they don't believe in a god). They believe that **science** and looking for **evidence** gives us the best way of answering our questions about the world.



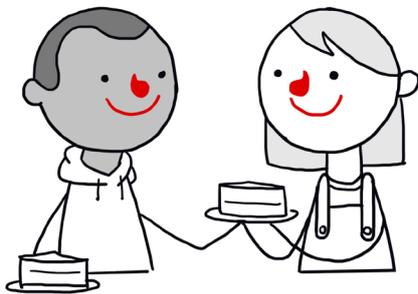
**3** Humanists believe this is the **one life** we have and so we need to make the most of it. They believe we should be **free** to decide how we live (as long as we do not cause harm to others), seeking **happiness** and supporting others to do the same.



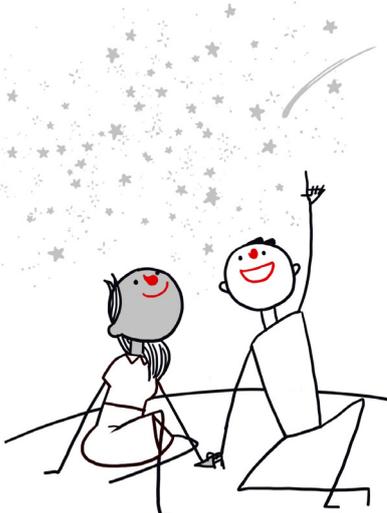
**4** Humanists believe we should use **empathy** and try to treat other people kindly and fairly. We should consider the consequences of our actions and the likely impact on other people and animals.



**5** Humanists believe that human beings alone are **responsible** for making the world a better place. Many campaign for equality and human rights. They celebrate the progress we have made, but recognise the work that is still to be done.



Many humanists admire and try to live by the **GOLDEN RULE**: 'Treat other people the way you would want to be treated in their situation. Do not treat others in a way you would not like to be treated yourself.'



## HUMANIST CEREMONIES

Many non-religious people today choose to have a humanist ceremony. This could be a naming ceremony (to celebrate the arrival of a new baby), a wedding, or a funeral. They are led by a humanist celebrant. Humanist ceremonies often focus on the freedom of those involved to choose how they want to mark the occasion, and the importance of the love and support of other people in our lives.

