

The Golden Rule

Note for Parents and Teachers

The Golden Rule, also known as the Ethic of Reciprocity, is arguably the most consistent, prevalent, and universal ethical principle in history. It is found worldwide throughout cultures, religions, secular philosophies, and indigenous traditions. Many people regard it as the most concise and general principle of ethics.

Gold itself has symbolic value and a psychological appeal that spans cultures throughout history. As a metaphor, it points to what is most pure, noble, enduring, and ideal. Gold was long considered the most valuable of metals throughout the world. It is therefore no surprise that the Golden Rule contains a “gold” metaphor, as its principle is prized in almost all societies.

The principle of the Golden Rule has been valued by human societies for thousands of years. Why does it deserve renewed attention today? What special significance does the Golden Rule have for this generation of students?

The Golden Rule is often thought of as a rule for individuals: A person must consider how he or she would wish to be treated when deciding how to treat others. However, our changing world invites us to broaden this rule to groups of people and society as a whole.

Many regions of the world, including our own country, are quickly becoming more multicultural, with people of many cultures and religions working to find ways to live together in harmony. The Golden Rule, with roots in a wide range of the world’s religions and cultures, is well-suited to be the standard to which different cultures can appeal in resolving conflicts. As the world becomes more of a single interacting global community, the need for such a common standard is becoming more urgent. The Golden Rule can be the ethical cornerstone as the human family works together to build a peaceful, just, and sustainable global society.

Because the Golden Rule is a point of agreement and a common denominator among so many of the world’s cultures, races, and religions, it has tremendous capacity for promoting social justice, the teaching of compassion and ethics, multicultural and multifaith cooperation, unity, and more.

Today we are living in a global village. Accordingly, we are all global citizens in addition to belonging to our particular groups, races, cultures, religions, and nations. Being a global citizen brings both privileges and responsibilities. The Golden Rule may be the best guide we have for bringing all the world’s people to live together in peace.

Start a discussion about the Golden Rule:

- Why is it appropriate for this principle of ethics to be called the Golden Rule?
- List some everyday ways to bring the Golden Rule into our lives.
- What can young people do to encourage friends, family, and classmates to live by the Golden Rule?
- How can we realistically expect the Golden Rule to inspire different cultures, nations, and religions to interact ethically?

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HINDUISM

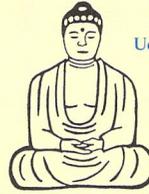
This is the sum of duty:
do not do to others what would
cause pain if done to you
Mahabharata 5:1517



BUDDHISM

Treat not others in ways
that you yourself would
find hurtful

The Buddha
Udana-Varga 5.18



CONFUCIANISM

One word which sums up the
basis of all good conduct...
loving-kindness.

Do not do to
others what
you do not
want done
to yourself

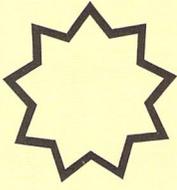
Confucius
Analects 15.23



BAHA'I FAITH

Lay not on any soul a load
that you would not wish to
be laid upon you, and
desire not for
anyone the
things you
would not
desire for
yourself

Baha'u'llah,
Cleanings



ISLAM

Not one of you truly believes
until you wish for others what
you wish for yourself

The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith



TAOISM

Regard your neighbour's gain
as your own gain, and your
neighbour's loss as your own loss
Lao Tzu, T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien, 213-218



JUDAISM

What is hateful to you,
do not do to your neighbour.
This is the whole Torah;
all the rest is commentary

Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a



SIKHISM

I am a stranger to no one;
and no one is a stranger
to me. Indeed, I am
a friend to all

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299



JAINISM

One should treat all
creatures in the world
as one would like
to be treated

Mahavira, Suttrakritanga



ZOROASTRIANISM

Do not do unto others whatever
is injurious to yourself

Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29



NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

We are as much alive
as we keep the earth alive

Chief Dan George



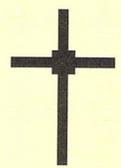
UNITARIANISM

We affirm and promote respect
for the interdependent
web of all existence
of which we are a part
Unitarian principle

CHRISTIANITY

In everything, do to others
as you would have them
do to you; for this is the
law and the prophets

Jesus, Matthew 7:12



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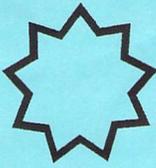
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