

PRINCIPLES

What are Principles?

Principles give us strength. They provide the foundations from which we get the power and energy to make a stand about the things that matter to us. They keep our aspirations on track. They give stability and help us move forward in a purposeful way.

How do Principles lead to Happiness?

The function of principles is to be our inner compass, a touchstone for who we are and what we want to do with our lives. They make us unique. It is a risky business to ignore them. We may find we give away our peace of mind.

Principles prevent us from being a victim of circumstance. They act as a bridge between the quiet times when we listen to what we feel inside, and the busy times when there is no time to think before we speak or act. Discipline and habit can help us stay on track. To stick by our principles in the face of temptation show that we are capable of taking responsibility for our lives.

Every day we create the causes and conditions for the future. If our goal is the happiness of self and others, we need to pay careful attention. The millions of tiny decisions we make each multiply into millions more.

Principles help us make friends and work together for good causes. They are a message, a badge of identity, which inspires confidence about who we are, how we operate and what we represent. Our principles can make us a refuge for everyone around us.

If we want to use our principles as a benchmark of standard against which we check ourselves, then humility and humor are essential. Do we dare to review the day's activities before we go to sleep? Can we be kind and patient with ourselves when we slip up? Our principles offer a reminder that we are all "work in progress".

"Constant development is the law of life, and a man who always tries to maintain his dogmas in order to appear consistent drives himself into a false position."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Many of us may agree that the delicate application of principled choices lies both within the balance between fear and courage.

When we are given the opportunity to act on our personal principles, filtering those choices through subtle forms of vanity or pride may come first. Will we look bad to our peers or colleagues? Will we be judged as politically incorrect? Finding our courage in these times seems paramount to acting on principles that are congruent to our mental and emotional growth.

With pride we succumb to believing our principles must be superior, simply because they're, well...ours! The Buddhist principle of allowing any and all viewpoints to merge into space before our own is chosen can keep our identity, and by extension, identification with our pride at its minimum. Principles too rigidly held can often get lost in the reverse prism of prideful dogma.

"Adversity is at the vanguard of bravery".

-The Dorje Dradul , Trunpa Rimpoche

The means to which act on our principles takes courage. But the dynamics between bravery and fear can oftentimes leave us befuddled as to which comes first. When a conflict or adversity comes to us, we falsely believe we must conquer our fear first and that the courage we will need comes second. If we search our memories we will usually find the opposite was actually true. It was the taking of the action first, in the midst of our fear, that allowed our courage to blossom, making it much easier for the best possible choices, and principles to win out.

"Our need for control stems from the self-centered fear of losing the control we think we have".

-Jimmy K., Founder of Narcotics Anonymous

The Principle of Self-Acceptance and its Counter Principle: Rigidity of Control.

The spiritual choice of letting go of all forms of control makes much room for our personal principles to grow and evolve. It's here that we can again look back to vanity and pride as our drivers for our self-centered need to control people, places and circumstances. Spouses, children, staff and authority figures will continually "push our buttons" and we in turn will not let go of one iota of control without leaving substantial claw marks all over these relationships.

The application of daily self-acceptance allows for levels of relaxation few people have experienced in their lifetimes. Acclimation to anxiety does not usually meet the required definition for relaxation. With the practice of non-existence we can come to believe in a larger acceptance that it is not only unnecessary to control outcomes, but that the control, acceptance and people in our lives are all not as nearly as solid as they seem.

"On some positions, cowardice asks the question, is it expedient? And then expedience comes along and asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? Conscience asks the question, is it right?"

There comes a time when one must take the position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because conscience tells him it is right."

— [Martin Luther King Jr.](#)