Life²

The 10 suggestions

10 moral principles for modern life

How can we be good?

Modern life can be confusing and complex, and it can be difficult to live in line with our values in a consistent way.

Over the years, various religions have given their followers moral principles for living, but some of these were written thousands of years ago and many people aren't religious.

So, in this leaflet we've drawn together 10 principles that could help us all live more ethical, kind and compassionate lives in the modern world, whatever our beliefs. As the title suggests, they are suggestions rather than commandments from any supreme authority.

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The 10 suggestions

10 moral principles for modern life

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1 Treat others the way you'd like to be treated

The golden rule, shared by many religions and philosophical schools of thought. If you only pick one rule to follow, pick this one, and you shouldn't go too far wrong.

2 Be responsible in how you communicate

With the rise of social media and digital communications, we all have an impact on how other people think and see the world. We each therefore have a responsibility to communicate in a thoughtful, compassionate and well-informed way. This includes not communicating when it would be better to do so.

3 Empathise with those you disagree with

Practice radical empathy, by trying to put yourself in the shoes of other people and understand their views - especially those you disagree with. Try to open civil conversation rather than shutting discussions down with judgement and aggression.

4 Put the planet first

Learn how you affect the world and take responsibility for it. Live within the one planet we have and take no more than your share. Set your lifestyle parameters around those of the planet.

5 Act in a just way

If you want to see fairness and justice in the world, you need to act in a fair and just way yourself. This includes common moral principles such as 'Do not steal' and 'Be honest', but should go beyond this to encompass all your behaviour.

6 Extend your moral radius

We are naturally inclined to care about those closest to us, such as friends and family. But we should extend our moral 'radius of care' to all human beings and beyond. Consider how your behaviour could change if you applied the same levels of empathy, understanding and care to all other people and living creatures.

7 Be kind

Don't just treat others as you'd like to be treated. Go further. Help people, go the extra mile, be of service. Spreading kindness and love like this will make the world better and make you feel great.

8 Open yourself to people who are different from you

Choose to be open rather than closed to people you don't know or who have different views, lives or backgrounds to you. Getting to know people who are different from you can remind you that we're all human beings, and can reduce the rise of hate and out-groups.

9 Get informed

In our complex modern world, being better informed can enable us to act in a more morally consistent and effective way. Take time to inform yourself about what you are as a creature, how you think and see the world, how other people live and the effect you have on the world. Use this knowledge to inform your moral behaviour.

10 Stand up for your values

There's no point in having values unless you can stand up for them - especially when they're most under threat. Practice standing up for your values and principles, even on small things. This can strengthen your ability to resist and speak up when it's really needed.