


# Developing your Personal Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are a set of statements which expresses your personal ideals and values. These values are essentially what shapes your framework for how you make your choices in life, your direction, and where your personal limits or sense of [personal morals or ethics](#) might be. Developing such a list (usually only 5 or 10 items long) is common in many business practices to ensure their decisions and policies are moving an organization in the same direction, unified in purpose, and consistently in execution. That's the idea at least...

## Benefits of Writing your Principles

The purpose of developing a set of guiding principles for yourself, or for your relationship, is the same – to help you define and become mindful of how you are making your  choices. Do your decisions support or contradict your values and principles? Are your values helping you to achieve your goals or dreams? Do you and your partner share the same values for a sustainable relationship? These questions can be answered if you have a clear sense of your principles, not intuitively vague, but specific and with words you can articulate to another.

We use principles such as these to communicate what is important to us, to remind ourselves of how to prioritize important decisions, to hold us accountable to our own actions, and to minimize regret or guilt by keeping us on track. If each day presents us with a seemingly limitless array of decisions and choices, are we making the most of each day by keeping in mind what is important to us? Helping to define your Guiding Principles does this, providing the reminder and criteria of what is most important to us and

helping to keep things as simple as possible.

## Examples of Guiding Principles

To provide you with an example of what a set of your personal Guiding Principles might look like, I have listed those that I personally have developed and use for myself. These are things I tend to review yearly, instead of creating new years resolutions, because if I hold myself to my Guiding Principles then promises to myself become less of an issue than making sure I support these in my daily choices:

**Acceptance** – To dismiss the expectation or illusion of your projections upon others or the world and see it for what it is; that which is, is, and will be what will be; things are what they are regardless of MY expectations;

**Accountable** – To understand that each moment presents to us a choice in how we perceive, feel, or respond; I can choose how I see things, how I think, how I manage my emotions, how I use my words and to whom I communicate, how I act and its consequences (intentional or unintentional).

**Excellence** – perfection is an illusionary projection, whereas excellence is applying your skills the best you can, with what resources you have, in the time available, knowing you as human are imperfect.

**Mindfulness** – Awareness of one's Being, within the moments of being; To be engaged in experience of the body, mind, emotion, and spirit; Discerning the difference between what IS and what one Desires To Be.

**Respect** – holding others and yourself in good esteem and acting towards a harmonious relationship; to see the need in others for their own Patience, Acceptance, Compassion and Judiciousness.

**Vulnerability** – to connect with others, to experience

emotions and the world, to feel joy – one must accept being open to these experiences – and being open means accepting fear or harm. Do Not Fear it.

## **Inspiration/Sources**

There are many possible sources for ideas to help you develop your core principles. If you don't have a place to start from, I recommend using spiritual and philosophic teaching as the foundation. Then you can edit in order to make them more "universal" for you personally, which is then restated in your own words. The source you derive your ideas is immaterial, be it common wisdom of family/friends, spiritual practices, political affiliation, etc. What matters most is how you identify with the ideas, and whether its something you are willing to uphold.

It has been my experience that many people will often start with what they know most – words of wisdom passed within their family (i.e. my grandpa used to say...), or religious writings such as those from Buddhism, Christianity, Folk religions, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism (wiccian, asatru, etc). After these usually come other influencers in peoples lives, such as a code of ethic behind a profession or trade such as medicine, martial/military code, etc.

Following below are a few examples of some sources you may not be readily familiar with, just to provide a reference for how such sources can be used to help develop your personal set of Guiding Principles:

### **Buddhist**

The Eightfold Path: The eightfold path is a way to live one's life. One does not have to master each item before going on to the next, though one can do so if one wishes. One can start in the middle and work towards the end or start at the end and work towards the beginning. One can even work on all of them

at once.

1. **Right Understanding:** Just being able to comprehend that **there is a difference between what is and what one desires to be** is sufficient. But note, there is an infinite regression on the why's and how's things came to be the way they are. That is call karma. The important thing is to see how one creates suffering. Then one will see's how others create suffering, that process deepens understanding and develops compassion. i.e. ACCEPTANCE
2. **Right Thought:** Wants and desires are thoughts. One can learns to select those thoughts which alleviate suffering. **Thoughts which cause desire and suffering in life are given up for thoughts which bring peace and tranquility.** Frivolous thinking can be given up for thinking about what is needed to meet basic necessities of life. i.e. ACCOUNTABILITY OF CHOICE
3. **Right Speech:** Talking can spread ideas and thoughts of wants and desires from one to another. It also re-enforces wants and desires which come to mind. **One gives up frivolous talk and gossip. One also gives up hurtful and angry language for they stem from wants and desires.** Talk reduces to what's necessary to teach or meet basic needs. i.e. CONSEQUENCE OF COMMUNICATION
4. **Right Action:** One's actions are also modified. One **refrains from harming others and from trivial activities.** One acts only to meet their basic needs or, out of compassion, to help other's meet their needs. i.e. CONSEQUENCE OF ACTION
5. **Right Livelihood:** How one chooses **to live and bring sustenance to their home** becomes important. One **gives up lying and taking from other's** even if it is considered "legal" by society in favor of giving to self and others. Careers, jobs, or hobbies which promote peace and prosperity for all are taken up over those which bring fame or fortune to oneself. i.e. HONOR

6. **Right Effort:** The Buddha didn't say this would be easy. **One should expect lapses, mistakes, and failures to crop up.** But over time the ability to follow each element of the eight fold path will get stronger. i.e. COMPASSION (including for the self)
7. **Right Concentration:** Concentration is the ability to quickly **discard distracting thoughts and views** which come into the mind that keep one from being focused on the immediate task at hand. Some schools of Buddhism use meditation to develop and strengthen this skill. Other schools use elaborate ceremonies and chants. i.e. CONVICTION
8. **Right Mindfulness:** **Mindfulness is the ability to bring oneself back** to the task at hand when one's concentration has lapsed. It is also the **ability to change focus** when new needs or priorities come to one's attention. The various schools of Buddhism use meditation, ceremonies and chanting to develop this skill as well. i.e. MINDFULNESS

## Wu-de

Traditional Chinese schools of martial arts often dealt with the study of martial arts not just as a means of self-defense or mental training, but as a system of ethics. Wu-de (武德) can be translated as "**martial morality**" and is constructed from the words wu (武), which means martial, and de (德), which means morality. Wu-de deals with two aspects; "morality of deed" and "morality of mind". Morality of deed concerns social relations; morality of mind is meant to cultivate the inner harmony between the emotional mind (心; Xin) and the wisdom mind (慧; Hui). The ultimate goal is reaching "no extremity" (无极; Wuji) – closely related to the Taoist concept of wu wei – where both wisdom and emotions are in harmony with each other.

## Deed

- Humility – Qian
- Virtue – Cheng
- Respect – Li
- Morality – Yi
- Trust – Xin

## Mind

- Courage – Yong
- Patience – Ren
- Endurance – Heng
- Perseverance – Yi
- Will – Zhi

## Asatru/Odinic “9 Virtues”

- Courage
- Truth
- Honour
- Fidelity
- Discipline
- Hospitality
- Self Reliance
- Industriousness
- Perseverance

## Toltec

Pillars of underlying philosophy known as “The Four Agreements”

- **Be impeccable with your word** – Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.

- **Don't take anything personally** – Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.
- **Don't make assumptions** – Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.
- **Always do your best** – Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse and regret.

Sir Vice

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