

THE GOLDEN RULE

This project was begun as a *simple sharing of a truth* which many, over millennia, have found deeply helpful as a guide to *remember* how we can live our lives. A quote which helps me to remember the importance of sharing truths is from G. I. Gurdjieff.

“And all cosmic truths usually become known to all on these planets, thanks to the fact that the beings of the given planet who by their conscious labors learn some truth or other share it with other beings of their planet, and in this way all the cosmic truths gradually become known by all the beings of the given planet without any distinction.”

We all get to know the truth because we share, as best we can with one another, what we understand to be a truth. Relationship, among all beings, is the vehicle by which we impart our understanding with another. The following story may shed a bit of light on my own limited understanding of this concept of relationship and how it has been part of shaping something inside that wishes to make honorable relationships with life and what it presents each day to us.

In fourth grade, our class recited both the Pledge of Allegiance and the Golden Rule. In the morning at the beginning of our day, the time together with all our classmates, was important and had a sense of purpose for me. There was a palpable unity as we spoke those words *together* before we began our studies for the day. Then, after a few weeks, there began to arise in me a feeling of disturbance. What was this disturbance? Once I really began to listen to that which I spoke, in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Golden Rule, I began to recognize what was actually implied even with my young and limited understanding. That disturbance remained and as I continued to examine it, then I realized that right next to me stood a girl, my friend, from another country. There were two children in our class from different countries. Their presence reminded me of others in other countries. It was having these foreign students among us which was making me quite aware that what we were saying with the Pledge of Allegiance did not include them – but what we were saying with the Golden Rule *did*. This was a simple ‘seeing’ of our being *together* in relation to the Golden Rule. That circumstance in my early life was an encounter with

a truth that still resonates within me — when I remember. I understood that the Golden Rule was a higher principle by which all could be included. And, I do not mean to imply that the Pledge of Allegiance does not have real meaning for me.

We all have allegiances – to our families, to our communities and to our countries. But today more is being required of us. We must begin to understand how to bring about an allegiance to all on this planet and to the planet itself.

. . . How is humanity to assume its proper place in the great chain of being? Gurdjieff's answer to these questions actually circumscribes the central purpose of his teaching—namely, that human life on earth may now stand at a major transitional point comparable perhaps to the fall of the great civilizations of the past and that development of the whole being of man (rather than one or another of the separate human functions) is the only thing that can permit man to pass through this transition in a manner worthy of human destiny. . .

Jacob Needleman, *The American Soul*

We understand that our children and grandchildren are that destiny – and that they can become worthy of, and responsible for, the conditions that will exist for their children and grandchildren.

In searching for a way to participate more actively in this potential destiny, we began to conceive of a way to put to work this most practical and basic principle. Emphasis needs to be placed on the word “practical.” Catastrophic situations exist all over this planet, from wars, global warming, disease, starvation, poverty and many more too numerous to mention. All of us are in need of real tools by which to address these very serious situations. In the distribution of our broadsides, we have become aware that such a basic principle can be framed, put on a pedestal, mostly believed in – but often ignored or not remembered. It is through all of you who have participated in the Golden Rule project, to date, who have taught us how to put The Golden Rule to *practical* use in our lives.

To ponder and apply the golden rule, we need knowledge and imagination. ***All of us need to realize what effect our actions have on the lives of others.*** We need to be able to *imagine* ourselves, vividly and accurately, in the other person's place, on the receiving end of the action. And in conjunction with this great task, we must observe our inner talking and attitudes toward those who we are trying to consider. With knowledge, imagination and the guidance of the Golden Rule, we have the potential to progress far.

Quote from Mrs. Staveley that we have on the broadside.

There is no better training in awareness and sensitivity – even understanding and attention – because in order to consider my brother or my neighbor externally I need to take him or her into the field of my attention in a very real way. I must be open to his or her needs, sufferings, and that means putting some of my own self-absorption off to one side.

The Golden Rule, with roots in all world cultures, is well suited to be a standard, which different societies and countries could use as the basis of the process in resolving conflicts. As the world becomes, in many ways, an interacting global community, the need for such a common standard, a shared truth is becoming more and more urgent.

While working on this project, we have discovered that it must be both individually and collectively, that we learn. Reciting and practicing the Golden Rule helps us to remember in both ways.

What else can be done collectively with this principle?

For example, if one were to remember the Golden Rule, in relation to the debate in our own state legislature about the existing surplus monies, how would that impact our views on tax cuts or money for education? What influence would a collective effort of many have by using the Golden Rule as a basic principle from which serious considerations of issues are addressed?

Being able to question is an important aspect of all learning. To come to a position, all sorts of issues need to be carefully examined. This will lead to a more and more objective view from which to base our current views. Later more will ‘come in’ which may alter that view again or deepen the understanding. Being open and continuing the questioning is the key.

The artists illuminations which we are about to show you, with their stories and sincere consideration of the formulations, have widened our horizon.

Others who have been involved have made us aware of many formulations yet unknown to us. We collected 108 to begin with and now have many more. We have lost the count, but more importantly we have not lost what these other formulations have brought to our awareness and the depth of consideration that arises in each of us, but only if I continue to study and try to practically apply what is put forth by all of them.

Many, many refer to the education that must take place for us to learn about a more full

engagement of this most essential truth.

Consequently before this talk I have been considering the numerous approaches to education that are arising through diligent studies and observations of how we learn. This research has brought to our awareness the necessity that we need to be *open* to actually learn and find for ourselves that which is lacking in our lives and to educate ourselves and our children accordingly.

The research of Joseph Chilton Pearce, a faculty member at the Jung Institute, and a noted author on child development and Michael Mendizza, who is an author, educator, documentary filmmaker, and founder of [Touch the Future](#), a nonprofit learning design center have both begun to understand how effectively children learn when they play, has led to questions about what is to be learned, how children's brains develop, and what, at each of those stages, must be transcended? I quote:

“First it is the limitations of one's present and earlier stages of development as new stages open and unfold; physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Second and intimately interwoven with the first, we must transcend the limitations imposed by culture. Culture is the particular set of beliefs, customs, and expectations, the accepted self and world view of the group we develop in – how every good little girl and boy, and later every good parent ‘should’ behave.”

Implied in the work of Pearce and physicist, David Bohm, one of the world's greatest quantum mechanical physicists and philosophers, there exists two fundamentally different states of mind, the *conditioned* mind, educated, reflexive and filled with content – and the *unconditioned*, natural or original mind, pure potential, the innate capacity to learn and therefore to transcend the limitations and constraints imposed by our conditioning, self-image and acquired beliefs. The conditioned state focuses on content, the past and what has been learned. The unconditioned state gives attention to the present, to capacity, possibility, what new discovery might be made now and the excitement this possibility brings.

Ashley Montagu, in his book *Growing Young*, refers to this original unconditioned state of mind as the "genius of childhood," bursting with curiosity, imaginativeness, playfulness, open-mindedness, willingness to experiment, flexibility, humor, energy, receptiveness to new

ideas, honesty, eagerness to learn and love. None of these qualities refer to specific content, knowledge or experience. They describe the natural, and therefore optimum, state of mind to meet, explore and be transformed by its interaction with a dynamic changing world.

Our traditional factory-conditioning model of education values mostly the content and asks: "Did we get it right? What is our score?" The very structure of this, our most common model, creates anxiety and cripples the capacities of learning and performance.

The next frontier, in education and parenting, shifts and balances our attention to include not only "what is" but also to what "may be," to the natural unconditioned state of the mind and its limitless capacity to learn. From this perspective we would never ask: "Did you win?" Our only concern would be: "What did you learn and did you enjoy the experience?" No failure is implied in these questions. There is no anxiety. The new frontier is called "state specific learning and performance." Pearce summarized this emerging model years ago in his book *Magical Child*. "Play on the surface and the work takes place beneath our conscious awareness."

Could it also imply less dependence on verbal formulation as verifying one's experience? Sometimes if we, as parents and teachers, really looked at, observed our children, we may realize there are many times when a child is not ready to speak at all about what they learned or enjoyed, but may need time to digest their experience in the time of their own world of childhood.

State specific learning means that the "state" of our body and mind as it meets a challenge shapes our response to that challenge, it shapes our performance. Performance and learning are "state specific." Specific skills and content emerge from these specific learning states. Optimum states express as optimum performance and optimum learning.

In optimum states we access the genius of childhood; the full spectrum of our potential is active, alert, and ready to meet any challenge fully and completely. Athletes call optimum states the "zone," researchers call it "flow" and children call it "play."

One of the practical efforts, in relation to using the Golden Rule, is being tried by teacher of social studies in the Salt Lake school district. It has taken this form: the students jointly agree to adopt a question or problem to examine, and before the problem or question is considered, each student chooses a formulation of the Golden Rule to represent in his or her own way. They are to contemplate how, then, would it apply to approaching whatever problem is chosen to examine. At the end of the year we hope to hear how this works out. We sincerely hope to hear

and learn from you of your work with this principle.

Education is the real preparation. Schools, parents and community all play roles in teaching and socializing young people. In terms of scale, schools have a great opportunity and responsibility to serve the needs—and shape the lives—of America’s diverse youth. By high school graduation, students should demonstrate mastery in basic academic subjects and display the citizenship behaviors that support an open and just society. In other words, academic success *and* the development of pro-social behaviors are among the most important goals of K-12 education. Although relatively simple to define, schools across America struggle to realize even modest success in reaching these goals. Effective curricula exist, but many students have poor academic performance. As standardized test scores show, American youth lag behind their peers from other industrialized nations.

Similarly, despite the positive outcomes associated with proven approaches that foster social and emotional learning, too many schools are unsafe and too many students are affected by or engage in antisocial behaviors. Limited human and financial resources contribute to the crisis in education. But, something appears to be missing—the absence of which has hindered the outcomes of even the best curricula and brightest students.

We believe that schools can teach students effective strategies for refining attention, dealing with stress and anger, developing greater empathy and communication skills and, in time, cultivating a compassionate approach to life.

“Contemplative practice hones attention and supports emotional balance.” (from a Buddhist perspective on learning)

“The contemplation of things as they are, without substitution or imposture, without error or confusion, is in itself a nobler thing than a whole harvest of inventions.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“By following The Golden Rule one is guided, without fail, to become humanised, civilised and, when the wisdom and pertinence become what one lives by and lives for, a mainspring, no less, of ones inner sustenance and outer activities, one becomes spiritualised by the Golden Rule.”

“The Golden Rule is a matter of understanding, not one of belief. It surpasses all beliefs.”

The last two quotes were made by John Scullion, an editor, scholar and

associate of Bonnie Phillips. He resides in the U.K.

Unless we learn how to work through our differences, first of all within ourselves and then among ourselves – we will never understand what is required to diminish the most horrid of all occurrences on this planet, war. We will never understand the real root causes of such a horror without delving into our being and striving to become, ourselves, that which we sincerely wish to see. It must start with our own efforts. Take a look at the world today. There are very serious situations which we ourselves have created through our greed, vanity, pride, selfishness and lack of consideration for other and for our planet. The Golden Rule is a universal truth that if used, remembered and put to work could be the basis of all we wish to do and see.