

The Golden Rule – with a twist
By Jeanne Loehnis

Often stated as: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” the golden rule is a fundamental moral principle found in virtually all major religions and cultures, which simply means "*treat others as you would like to be treated.*" According to Wikipedia, it is arguably the most essential basis for the modern concept of human rights. Very likely, your parents quoted the golden rule often during your childhood in an effort to help you learn how to treat people well and be socially appropriate.

That's all well and good but, at the risk of being entirely misunderstood and branded as selfish, consider this twist on the familiar rule:

Do unto yourself as you do unto others.

What? Yes, **do unto yourself as you do unto others.** Two things can happen here. Perhaps you treat others very poorly, you never consider their feelings, never gift them with your generosity, time, kindness. If this is you, try treating yourself that way for awhile. How does it feel? Are you willing to continue this experiment for long? What has the “golden rule” taught you?

More likely, you don't treat others poorly. You were raised with the golden rule, yes? You go out of your way to treat others well, give them the respect they deserve, consider their needs before your own. When discussing what you and your family or friends will do tonight, you ask, “What would *you* like to do?”

The question of the day is: Do you treat yourself as well as you treat others? Do you ask yourself what you would *really* like to do tonight? Do you buy flowers and place them on *your* table? Do you listen to the voice within you and the feelings that you are experiencing? Do you ever choose *not* to do some kind act because you have a personal need that is important too? Probably not.

Sadly, though, in our efforts to be kind, to practice the golden rule, we often build up resentment toward others, especially when we feel that we aren't treated by them according to the same golden rule that we practice.

Take a moment and picture what is really happening here. Outwardly, our actions appear kind. But inwardly we harbor anger and keep score. We like to believe that no one notices the inner fuming. But just as you've noticed it in another, they notice it in you. Worse, *you* notice it in you when you realize that much of the discontent, stress, and even illness that you suffer comes from your own practice of the golden rule! The golden rule, which was intended to make the world a better place, has created a world of unhappy, ill, resentful beings trying to appear nice.

Again, the twist:

Do unto yourself as you do unto others.

Let's imagine for a moment, those times when we have gifted ourselves. Perhaps we took a nap and let our spouse watch the children for an hour. Maybe it was a walk at sunset or a reading break at the park. Maybe we really went out on a limb and did a weekend getaway – alone!

Three questions:

1. Was it hard to do those simple things for yourself?
2. How did it feel?
3. Would you have encouraged a friend to do those things?

Maybe it was very hard and you felt very guilty! But, one more question:

How did you feel when you were done?

The safest bet is that you felt refreshed, at peace, and ready to serve those family and friends who were denied your presence for that short time. By gifting yourself, you were freed of resentment and anger, and free to serve willingly and joyfully.

The golden rule, and treating others well, **is** important. But so must we be the object of our own affections at times. We know better than anyone else what our personal needs are in any given moment. Sometimes, those needs are better met than delayed – even when it means that another's *perceived* need of us goes unmet. In the end, the gifts we give ourselves serve the world through our subsequent and free service, generosity, and kindness.

So, *do unto yourself as you would do unto others!* Practice the Golden Rule with a twist and the true spirit of the Golden Rule will persist.

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