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The Golden Rule – The Ethics of Reciprocity

The Ethics of Reciprocity or “the Golden Rule,” is a fundamental moral principle which simply means “treat others only in ways that you’re willing to be treated in the same exact situation.” It is arguably the most essential basis for the modern concept of human rights. Most of us have heard of “The Golden Rule.” There are many variations to this rule which cuts across most cultures and world religions. Jesus, Hillel, and Confucius used it to summarize their ethical teachings. And for many centuries, the idea has been influential among people of very diverse cultures.

You might be thinking “so what does this have to do with diversity?” Part of respecting differences is thinking about how others feel; and the premise of “The Golden Rule” encourages people to treat each other with respect and dignity. To apply “the Golden Rule” adequately, we need knowledge and imagination. We need to *know* what effect our actions have on the lives of others. And we need to be able to *imagine* ourselves, vividly and accurately, in the other person’s place on the receiving end of the action. The diversity of “the Golden Rule” demonstrates in many ways that we all want the same things: to be able to be who we are and what we are, and be respected.

“The Golden Rule” with roots in a wide-range of world cultures, is well-suited to be a standard to which different cultures could appeal in resolving conflicts. The societal application of “the Golden Rule” would perhaps, eliminate the need for state and federal laws mandating civility. As the world becomes more and more a single interacting global community, the need for such a common standard is becoming more urgent.

Consider these versions of “the Golden Rule” found in world cultures and religions, then apply the principles espoused in Utah Extension work!

*Islam - No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.
Sunnah*

*Judaism- What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.
Talmud, Shabbat 31d*

*Hinduism- This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you.
Mahabharata 5, 1517*

*Native American- All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One."
Black Elk*

Christianity- Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12, King James Version.

Resource References: <http://www.teachingvalues.com/goldenrule.html> ; <http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm>

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