

The Eight Principles for Life.

1. Always be true to what you believe in. If you are guided by what you consider to be right, not only will you sleep better, because your conscience is clear, but you will not create unnecessary complications by, for example, saying one thing to one person and another thing to another. As I am fond of saying, the decisions that we make are based on two major sources, idealism and pragmatism. Sometimes we have to compromise our ideals because necessity dictates, but there should be a line over which we will not cross.

2. When you fall out with others try to see the world as they see it. This does not mean you have to agree with them. What is important, is that you try to understand others' perspectives, and why they think the way that they do.

3. Live each day to the max – never let time go by, wasted. This is a cliché, but it should not be ignored. This sense of purpose is undoubtedly a win-win because, as well as helping one's sense of well-being, it helps you, and those around you, to get things done that need to be done. In this I include the 'managerial' side of life, such as making sure that the car has successfully passed its M.O.T., as well as the more 'creative' side of life, such as, for me, writing my next play. I often talk about a sense of 'rhythm' in life, so that you get the balance right between work, physical exercise, meeting friends and relaxing at home.

4. Every time you fall down or feel broken stand up and mend yourself. Everyone meets difficulties in their lives, whether that be the relatively trivial, such as missing a bus to go to the pub, or far more major, such as the loss of a loved one. Salovey and Mayer divide emotional intelligence into five areas, including: knowing one's emotions; managing emotions; motivating oneself; recognising emotions in others; handling relationships. Sometimes we focus on the *inter-personal*, but it is one's ability to understand oneself, manage one's emotions and motivate oneself, the *intra-personal*, which also contribute to a person having a happy and fulfilled life. It is natural and normal for all human beings to go through periods of unhappiness and happiness, but it is important to believe that 'the dark comes before the dawn'; without winter we would not appreciate the summer. The principle of 'binary oppositions' tells us that we cannot truly appreciate happiness without having lived through, and understood, sadness. When you are criticised, listen, because that person may have criticised you for your benefit. Never forget, what a person says about you can often tell you more about them than it does about you. This is particularly true if they have 'an axe to grind'.

5. Treasure every act of kindness and kind words – they are gifts. There is a natural human tendency to focus on the negative rather than the positive. Research relating to the praise-to-criticism ratio tell us that the impact of a negative remark will only be counter-balanced by between 5 and 7 positive comments. When we receive feedback there is the tendency to focus on the negative, ignoring the positive. For this reason, it is vitally important to be careful when responding to, and giving, negative comments. One of my rules, as headteacher, was that 'Praise is for public, and criticism of for private', so I would never use my position unfairly, to criticise someone in front of others. Such criticism would be in private and, even then, it would be professional and not personal.

6. When you feel low, just find a friend and laugh together. Friends are so important in our lives because these are the people that we have chosen to spend our time with, rather than those who we know for other reasons, such as through work. I am not in the slightest envious of someone who has greater wealth than I do, but I may feel envious if they are happier. Laughter is both a reflection of the way we feel, and a stimulus for relieving stress. Spending time with a friend, someone you trust, enables you to laugh at yourself, if this is what helps, or, at least, share a joke, safe in the knowledge that you have a similar view of the world around you.

7. None of us are as useless as we think we are when we feel low, and none of us are as good as we think we are when we feel high. These are the famous, words of Rudyard Kipling in his poem 'If': 'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster, And treat those two imposters just the same..... And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!'. In parallel to this, I often say that, when I have been successful, it is often due to the efforts of others (this was particularly true in my role as headteacher), whereas when I am criticised, or do not do well, this *can* have been due to circumstances outside my control. In any situation, the only real question you can ask yourself is, 'Did I do my best?' If you did your best and were not successful, then you can do no more, particularly if you acted in the way you did for all the right reasons, guided by your moral compass. Don't look to shame other people. Your football team might have won this week, but they might well be losing next week!

8. Don't take yourself too seriously, but do take your mission in life seriously. The ability to laugh at yourself helps you to lead a happy life and to get along better with others. As a headteacher, my mission was to help to make the schools as successful as possible, for the sakes of the students themselves, and everyone involved in the school community. It is not all about you, but about those about you.

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