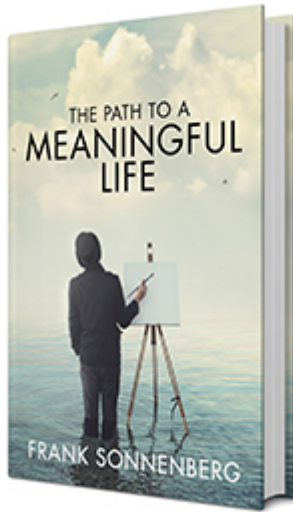


# Living the Golden Rule

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Frank Sonnenberg has been a longtime friend of The Ray Center and CHARACTER



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Everyone knows the Golden Rule. In fact, numerous religions espouse it, the most familiar version being, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The question is, if most people know, and agree, with the principle, why don’t more folks live by that standard? Do you abide by the Golden Rule?

*When you do nothing, nothing happens.*

If you truly want to live by this principle, the first place to start is to understand its *true* meaning and how to apply it effectively.

First, the Golden Rule should say, “Do unto others *as THEY want to be treated*” rather than “*how YOU want to be treated.*” Otherwise, you’re imposing *your* preferences and values unto others.

Second, be empathetic. Don’t *assume* you know what people need; you’re not a mind reader. Everyone is unique; treat people according to their *individual* needs and desires.

## **How to Live by the Golden Rule**

There are many ways to incorporate the precepts of the Golden Rule into your daily life. Here are 30 examples:

**See the good in people.** Make people feel special.

**Be the first to give.** Give for the right reason – and that is, give for no reason at all.

**Play by the rules.** Don't cut in line. Wait your turn.

**Listen to others.** Communicate. Don't just take turns talking.

**Be unbiased.** Never judge someone you don't know.

**Keep an open mind.** Search for the truth by listening to opposing arguments and letting others challenge your views and opinions.

**Give people a chance.** As you climb the ladder of success, reach down and pull others along with you.

**Make every collaboration win-win.** Never win at the expense of a relationship.

**Be selfless.** Put others' needs ahead of your own.

**Tell it like it is.** Don't say anything behind someone's back that you wouldn't say to their face.

**Stop criticizing.** Constructive feedback is helpful; criticism is hurtful and damaging.

**Set the bar high.** Be tough but fair. Don't demand things of others that you're unwilling to do yourself.

**Work hard.** Pull your weight rather than weigh down the team.

**Have a heart.** Stand up for those who are less fortunate.

**Be tolerant.** Don't force your views on others. You can't expect others to abandon their values any more than you would forsake your own.

**Give with an open hand.** Give with no strings attached.

**Be available.** Be a good friend in good times and bad.

**Be informed.** Listen to both sides of a debate before forming your opinion.

**Build trusting relationships.** Earn respect rather than demanding it.

**Be compassionate.** Help people get back on their feet. But don't make them dependent on your good graces.

**Be even-handed.** Consider whether fairness would still apply if the tables were turned.

**Forgive and forget.** Let it go. Seeking retaliation rather than forgiveness traps you in the anger.

**Share the credit.** Deflect recognition rather than hoarding it.

**Hold out hope.** Lend an ear or a shoulder to cry on.

**Accept "no" for an answer.** Respect people's priorities rather than making everything about you.

**Be willing to sacrifice.** Raise your own hand rather than volunteering others.

**Offer your unconditional love.** Accept people for who they are, *not* for who you want them to be.

**Earn your keep.** You *don't* get what you want; you get what you deserve.

**Give up control.** Put your faith in people rather than micromanaging them.

**Be grateful.** Show your appreciation and never take anything for granted.

## **The Golden Rule – Make It a Reality**

The only thing required to live the Golden Rule is the will and desire to shift your focus from yourself to others –

selfish to selfless. In doing so, it's not only beneficial to others, it'll benefit you in ways you'd never imagine. But a good intention is like an idea that you keep to yourself. If you don't do something with it, it's like it never existed.

*The Golden Rule is not just a nicety; it's a way of life.*

Make the effort today, and then again tomorrow. As Edwin Markham, the American poet, said, "We have committed the Golden Rule to memory; let us now commit it to life." The fact is, success is a game of inches. When you do something well day in, and day out, the cumulative impact is huge. Before you know it, you're living the Golden Rule.

Excerpted from *The Path to a Meaningful Life* by Frank Sonnenberg.



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Additionally, his blog – FrankSonnenbergOnline – has attracted millions of readers on the Internet. It was recently named one of the “Top Self-Improvement and Personal Development Blogs” in the world, and it continues to be named among the “Best 21st Century Leadership Blogs,” the “Top 100 Socially-Shared Leadership Blogs,” and the “Best Inspirational Blogs On the Planet.”

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# Move Beyond Stereotypes (Grades 6-12)



## Overview:

This lesson explores the stories of real people to help students learn how to move beyond stereotypes. They'll learn how accepting others' authentic and unique selves demonstrates respect and fairness.

## Character Education Objectives:

### Students will:

- how sharing our individual stories with the world helps break down unfair stereotypes.
- explore Human Library stories.
- reflect on their experiences with the Human Library story.

## Materials:

- Videos from Aumen Film Co. (2017) *The Human Library Trailer*.  
Youtube.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7vJgyRJ-zo>

## Opening Discussion:

- “Stereotypes lose their power when the world is found to be more complex than the stereotype would suggest. When we learn that individuals do not fit the group stereotype, then it begins to fall apart.” – Ed Koch
  - Ask students what this quote means to them?
- Share some stereotypes (teens, elderly, rich, poor). Then, ask about a stereotype students have (or used to have) about a group or individual.

## Instruction and Activity:

- Teach students about Human Library projects. It is a collection of real-life human stories you can “check out.” These stories aim to break stereotypes. In addition, they help people embrace fairness and togetherness through our differences.
  - Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7vJgyRJ-z0>
- Ask students to explore the Human Library to learn more about others. Most importantly, suggest choosing individuals whom they may normally stereotype.
  - <https://humanlibrary.org/meet-our-human-books/>

## Discussion:

- Why did you select that particular human library book?
- What did you learn about someone else today?
  - Why did learning about someone’s story impact any stereotypes you have or had?
  - How does getting to know someone else’s story make you a more connected citizen?
  - Describe how hearing someone else’s journey impacts your own story.

## Reflection:

- What did you learn about yourself today?

- How did what you learn today help you move beyond stereotypes?
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# Making Assumptions and Respecting Others (Grades 6-12)



**Overview:** This lesson focuses on the importance of respecting the differences of others, the impact of making assumptions about others, and how respecting each other's differences can make relationships stronger.

## Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- watch a video about respecting the differences of others,
- discuss how to recognize and respect each other's differences,
- reflect on experiences when they made assumptions,
- reflect on how making assumptions impacts our ability to respect differences

### **Materials:**

- Video: UNeek Productions. 2017. *Different*. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/yu24PZIbkoY>

### **Opening Reflection:**

- "We do not see the world as it is, we see the world as we are" – Andy Stanley
  - What does this quote mean?
  - How do our assumptions impact the way we treat others?
  - How do our assumptions affect relationships?

### **Watch Video:**

- UNeek Productions. 2017. *Different*. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/yu24PZIbkoY>

### **Discussion:**

- How were these two different from each other? You? Me?
- How did their differences impact their relationship in the beginning?
- What did they learn about one another's differences?
- How can changing your perception help you to respect differences?
- In what ways can you show someone that you respect their differences?
- How can respecting someone's differences help you develop stronger relationships?



## Reflection

- Write about a time when you made an assumption about someone. Describe how you discovered that your perception of them was wrong once you got to know them.
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# Our Differences Make Us Stronger (Grades K-5)



**Overview:** Our differences are our greatest strengths. Learning about what we have in common gives us a sense of belonging, but embracing and respecting our differences makes us a stronger community.

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- explore the similarities and differences of their classmates.
- discuss what it means to recognize and respect each other's differences.
- reflect on how it feels to be excluded for your differences.

**Materials needed:**

- Large sheets of paper—write 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each
- Marker
- One die with the 6 and 5 covered up
- List of questions (*see below*)

**Directions:**

1. Place one numbered sheet of paper in each corner of the room.
2. Gather the group in the middle of the room and point out the four corners.
3. Read a set of choices (use suggestions listed below or create your own) and ask students to go to the corner that best represents them. For example: "Which drink do you like the best? Go to corner 1 if you like soda the best, corner 2 for juice, corner 3 for milk, or corner 4 for water."
4. Once the students move to the corner that represents them, ask each corner to briefly discuss why they selected their answer.
5. Ask a few students from different corners to share with the large group.
6. After a brief discussion, roll the dice. The number it lands on is the "unlucky number." Eliminate the students in that corner. If you need to move the game more quickly, use the dice to choose the "lucky number" and that corner stays.

7. Keep playing until only a few participants are left. Play through at least two times.
8. Following the activity, ask:
  - How did it feel to be with others who are just like you?
  - How does it feel when you are different than everyone else?
  - What can we do to show respect to those who are different than us?
  - How could our differences make us a stronger group?
  - What did it feel like when you were eliminated from the game because of your differences?

***Question Suggestions:***

- Which music do you like best...rock, rap, country, or classical?
- Which do you wear most often...tennis shoes, sandals, bare feet, or boots?
- Which drink do you like the best...soda, juice, milk, or water?
- Are you most like a...square, triangle, circle, or oval?
- What type of movie do you like best...action, romance, comedy, or science fiction?
- Where would you most like to go on vacation...the beach, mountains, an amusement park, or camping?
- What color do you like best...green, purple, pink, or blue?

*Adapted from Team-Building Activities for Every Group*

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# Achieve and Avoid



Good communication requires us to respect each other. A tip for respectful conversations is to consider:

- what we want to achieve.
- what we to avoid.

## Achieve and Avoid

It is easy to focus too much on what we want to achieve in our conversations. For example, “I want to convince this person that I am right” or “I want to make this person realize that they are not considering all of the facts.” But, we should be putting the same focus on what we want to avoid during the conversation. We want to avoid insulting the other person, or even worse, ruining a relationship from a conversation gone wrong.

Before a conversation, if we think about what we want to achieve, we could want to:

- express our own opinion.
- give examples of our perspective.

We want to avoid:

- insulting the other person.
- making someone else feel insignificant or disrespected.

## Approaching with Respect and Tolerance

It is important to remember that showing someone respect doesn't mean you are endorsing their beliefs. We don't have to agree with another person to give them respect and accept that their beliefs are valid to them.

Therefore, if we genuinely want to engage with someone who has different opinions, we need to approach them with respect and acceptance. A quick look at social media can show us that sometimes differences in opinion bring out criticism of people who think differently than we do. Criticism and judgment in those moments are precisely what we wanted to avoid. It will cause others to shut down communication and entrench them more deeply into their ideas and beliefs.

## Your Next Conversation

Of course, we don't always prepare for each conversation and think through what we want to achieve and what we want to avoid. But, if we practice being aware of what we want to achieve and avoid, we'll get better at having respectful conversations that both people feel good about.

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# Disagreeing with Respect (Grades 6-12)





## Overview:

This lesson focuses on disagreeing with respect.

## Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- review a video about respecting others even when you disagree.
- discuss what it means to respect others through disagreement.
- reflect on their own level of respect during disagreements.

## Materials:

- Videos (Choose one)
  - SoulPancake. (2016) Kid President Is Over It! Youtube.com. <https://youtu.be/ghk-nDJB3Tk>
  - Myahamoment. (2015) Donna and Bob- An Unlikely Firendship. Mutual of Omaha. <https://youtu.be/4dMMCVfKP9s>

## Lesson:

## *Opening Reflection*

- What does this quote teach you about disagreeing with respect? “Do not focus on being right, focus on getting it right. “

## *Review content (Whole Group)*

- SoulPancake. (2016) Kid President Is Over It! Youtube.com. <https://youtu.be/ghk-nDJB3Tk>
  - Myahamoment. (2015) Donna and Bob- An Unlikely Friendship. Mutual of Omaha. <https://youtu.be/4dMMCVfKP9s>

## *Whole Group Discussion*

- What was your favorite take away from the video?
- What are the differences between healthy and toxic disagreements?
- How can you show respect even when you disagree?
- What are some hot topics that people around you, on the news, or in the community disagree on?
- What examples have you witnessed of people handling disagreements disrespectfully and respectfully?
  - Compare the outcomes and emotions in those disagreements.

## *Reflection*

- Think about the last disagreement you had and consider ways you showed respect or ways you could have modeled respect better. What is a strategy discussed today that you can try to remember for the next time you have a disagreement?

## **More**

- Respect is one of the Six Pillars of Character. Learn more about the Pillars.
- For more lessons on respect, use the filter tool to find

lessons by value and age range.

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# Respect and Teamwork (Grades K-5)



## Overview:

Students will practice the skills necessary to show respect and teamwork through a group project to build a structure. Students will practice teamwork, giving helpful feedback, and patience.

## Character Education Objectives:



Students will:

- practice patience while being limited in their abilities during the challenge.
- demonstrate effective teamwork by completing the structure together.
- reflect on how feedback can change the outcome of the project.

### **Materials:**

- Materials to build a structure: pieces of wood, cardboard blocks, etc.
- Sample structure should be built ahead of time and piles of exact same building materials laid out for each group.

### **Lesson:**

1. Divide students in groups of 2-4.
2. Facilitator shows group the structure. Allow them to look at it for at least one minute.
3. Give the instruction that each person will take a piece or pieces and must not touch any other pieces other than their own or the group will have to start over.
4. Each person in the group takes a piece or pieces of building material.
5. The group now duplicates the structure like the original.
6. Give the group a set amount of time. If they need more time, negotiate for what they are willing to give up (talking, one arm behind back, etc).
7. If groups are having trouble, take a time out and have them discuss how they are going to do it, then have them try again.

### **Discussion:**

- Discuss the process they used either by plan or by

default.

- Discuss what they heard while they were working, were people being encouraging or critical? How did that make them feel? Did they do anything to change the atmosphere?
- Discuss patience. Is it hard or easy for them?
- How does this activity reflect other things they have to do as a group or team?

**More:**

- Respect is one of the Six Pillars of Character. Learn more about the Pillars.
- For more lessons on respect, use the filter tool to find lessons by value and age range.

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# Respecting Differences (Grades K-5)

Respect is being tolerant and accepting of differences. To practice that skill, you need opportunities to learn about others and how they may be different than you. A great way to practice it and to learn about others is to play ice breaker games throughout the year. You'd be surprised how much you learn about even lifelong friends by doing some get-to-know-you activities.

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# **Respect Yourself (Grades 6-12)**

Respecting yourself and thinking positively about your body, mind, skills, and situation is important to build happiness in your heart. This lesson will focus on ways to show respect to yourself, others, and your surroundings by being grateful for who you are and what you have.

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## **Conflict Resolution for Kids**

Although we can't protect our kids from problems, frustrations and heartaches, we can arm them with tools to better handle them. The more we help them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully, the greater the likelihood they'll develop into more self-sufficient, and resourceful individuals able to deal any issue—and do so without our guidance.