

# 10 Guiding Principles That Will Lead You to Future Happiness and Success

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We spend so much time focusing on credentials, experience, intelligence, and presentation. And yet, what is crystal clear to me after 20 years in leadership roles is that those ingredients, while important to success, aren't enough if you've forgotten the fundamentals of being positive, learning from others, being honest and the kind of person people **want** to work with.

I wrote the book *Always and Never: 20 Truths for a Happy Heart*, to help center readers on guardrails for living and leading at your best. When you step outside of these boundaries, your professional and personal life are likely to suffer, holding you back on both fronts. Read, reflect, and recommit to these Always and Nevers, and realize the kind of future you've been planning for.

## 1. ALWAYS be in charge of your thoughts

What you say and how you feel starts with the way you think. The way you think about everything is in your control. Thoughts are like seeds that need to be watered and nurtured with real knowledge, by real experts and real friends. A curious, open mind lets in the necessary sunshine.

**Never** forget that you are in charge of the way you think, and a healthy mind requires ongoing fertilization.

## 2. ALWAYS listen before speaking

And then listen some more. Listen to understand, to demonstrate empathy, and to give the gift of your time and attention. Listen with your eyes as well as your ears. This requires slowing down long enough to truly see the person in front of you. When people want to talk, especially loved ones, they're rarely seeking answers from you. They want a sounding board, reassurance, and to connect with someone close to them.

**Never** dominate the conversation; you have two ears and one mouth for a reason.

## 3. ALWAYS follow the Golden Rule

Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Islam all subscribe to a version of the Golden Rule in their religious teachings. It's a simple notion that has endured through the ages. Treat other's the way you'd like to be treated. Kindness, patience, being first to say I'm sorry are the hallmarks of the Golden Rule, and the rewards to you are long-lasting: inner peace and a life of no regret.

**Never** let the mean acts of others cause you to break the Golden Rule.

#### 4. **ALWAYS tell the truth**

The truth has everything to do with intent. When intentions are pure and not mixed with anything else, there is the capacity for truth. In your daily consumption of information and interactions be aware of sources involved and their potential motives. People who spread rumors and half-truths are always recruiting new members.

*Never* gossip or waste time with those who do.

#### 5. **ALWAYS do as you say you will**

Make your commitments a priority, and you'll earn something invaluable-- trust. The ability to build and keep trust is worth more than anything else you can bring to the table. There is no skill, degree, or talent that can replace it. Trust is the connective tissue between you and every important relationship in your life: your parents, spouse, boss, coworkers, and friends.

*Never* undermine trust placed in you by others by not keeping your word.

#### 6. **ALWAYS place a high value on you**

The most important relationship you will ever have is the one you have with yourself. Take care of your health and finances on a daily basis. Make your voice the loudest you hear, and the first one you listen to about your hopes and dreams. The compelling force for happiness and success in your life is you and only you.

*Never* allow others to determine your ability and potential.

#### 7. **ALWAYS be a student**

G. Bernard Shaw is credited with the adage "Youth is wasted on the young." Wouldn't it be great to preserve all the wonders of youth as we gain the wisdom and knowledge that comes long after high school and college? There is something you can do to maintain your youthful outlook on life—always be a student. Seek out opportunities where you aren't the smartest person in the room and learn. Read books and magazines that broaden your horizons. Continuing your education in formal and informal ways will keep you young and interesting.

*Never* think you're too smart or too old to learn something new.

#### 8. **ALWAYS separate opinion from fact**

Opinions are just that, one person's view. They can be wrapped in fear or prejudice. Opinions can make people as impervious as steel preventing the passage to clear thinking or new possibilities. Keep your mind free of opinions and focus on acquiring real knowledge. Be selective about people who hold themselves out as experts. The best knowledge possible is that which comes from your first-hand research and experiences. Get the facts before you make big purchases, cast your vote, or try to influence others.

*Never* mistake opinion for fact.

## 9. **ALWAYS see the beauty in mistakes**

Allow yourself to see mistakes in a whole new light. Learn from them, and one day, your mistakes will provide material for the stories you tell, your heartfelt advice to others and your expanding book of self-confidence. Always forgive yourself and others for making mistakes. Make decisions based on the best information you have and be confident you will be able to handle the outcome.

*Never* allow mistakes to cause shame or prevent you from trying again.

## 10. **ALWAYS share credit for success**

If you want to be known as a team player, to be included in big projects and considered for promotion, look for ways to acknowledge others and their contributions. In fact, the group is always smarter than any one person, so why not embrace it and say so. When you make co-workers feel a part of something, they are inspired to do their best. People who inspire are literally pushed up the ladder by their peers.

*Never* allow your desire for praise overrule recognition for the group.

These principles come to you as a loving reminder, moment of reassurance, and reaffirmation of all that is important today and will be for the rest of your life. It comes from someone who has learned through experience these change-proof concepts the hard way.