

Practice These Principles in All Our Affairs

Principles are Not Flexible.

When I entered the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I *identified* with just about everything I had read and heard, and I began to recognize where I went wrong up to that point. I realized that I had no *direction in my life*, no *moral compass* to speak of, and that the failure in my personal relationships manifested itself in low self-esteem (self-loathing). I felt inferior, unworthy, disrespected, isolated, unappreciated, disliked, etc. etc. I was going to have to depend on something outside of myself to govern my judgment and my decision-making. One of the first default positions I would take to surrender to these new realities was to concede to the fact that, as an alcoholic, *my brain did not process information properly*, and that I was going to have to trust in something more reliable. Living by *Principles, What a Concept!* There are people who believe that if we all lived by one simple principle, we would not need any other laws on this planet, and that principle is *The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you*. That simple statement gave me an understanding of how I could begin adopting a value system, based on principles, where I did not have to originate my own rules. While reading a book on economics, the author stated that *"a man who lives by principles has 99% of his decisions already made for him"*. With that in mind, I began to establish a system of principles that are consistent with the AA program, and, I might add, with most of the other successful philosophies of life. I would read the *St. Francis Prayer (12&12pg 99)* daily. *I attend a step study meeting weekly to reinforce these principles*. I try to make sure that I am not modifying these standards to evade the tougher actions. I was complaining about another member of our group one day, to one of my mentors at that time, and he suggested that I try to *place principles before personalities*. I responded, yes, but I do not agree with his principles. He then said it was not *his principles* that we are talking about, but that it was *my principles that needed to change*. He then informed me that we cannot be selective about who and when we apply these values. I must treat everyone with respect, and that goes for *the smallest, innocent child to the most errant rogue that I might encounter*. I know that it seems like an impossible task, but I assure you that if you start with the child and work your way to the rogue, it will get easier, if you do not let your ego convince you otherwise. There are many suggestions in the Big Book and the 12&12 that have given me plenty of material to work with so that *this does not have to become a crisis management project*. It is more like *a lifelong pruning of my unwanted, destructive behaviors*. Here are a few of those suggestions: *Restraint of tongue and pen, Drop the word blame from your thoughts and speech, Stop fighting everyone and everything. Cash-register honesty means I must be honesty with everyone, not just the person at the Cash-register*, and so on. If we all had amnesia, we would all be pretty much the same. *The only thing that makes us different is the things we carry around between our ears*. It may be time to reprogram the mental software to default to the principles that have been proven to work so well for so many. No one could ever fault us for living by the principles that we learned in A.A.