

*You
can make a
difference
in building
better people
better relationships ...
better communities ...
and a better world.*

Definitions

*Intended for use with The Ethical Framework—
these are not necessarily the dictionary definitions.*

Common Good—Widespread benefit as contrasted with self-interest or special interest; benefiting the involved group such as a couple, family, community, organization, city, state, country, or a society.

Demonize or Dehumanize—Describe or see others as worthless or less than human.

Dignity—Respectability, self-esteem, honor.

Discriminate—Treat others unfairly because they are different.

Ethical Framework—Ethical and moral essential human values that are the foundation for relationships and dealing with people.

Ethics and Morals—Basic principles of attitude and behavior, taking into account and considering the common good (see Common Good) and the interests of others as well as your own.

Harmony—Peace, understanding, unity.

Inherent—Built in, inborn, natural, basic.

Preservation—Protection from wasteful and improper use.

Sacred—Revered, respected.

Self-interest—Considering only your own interests and benefit.

Stereotype—See all people as being the same within a common description, such as race, religion, ethnic background, or economic class.

Wrongdoing—Bad intent, bad results, or both.



The Ethical Framework

**A Foundation
On Which
To Build
Daily Living**

*Produced by the Triangle Interfaith Alliance,
formerly Interfaith Alliance of Wake County, North Carolina*

Statement of Goals and Purposes

Mission

- To build a common bond around which all people can come together.
- To transform society through ethical daily living.
- To develop a way of life that brings out the best in ourselves.

Vision

A society in which the focus is shifted to the overall well-being (psychological, spiritual, and emotional as well as economic and material) of our people and of our nation.

- Where there is an ever increasing commitment to ethical living as the second norm for behavior alongside legal behavior, including kindness, generosity, caring, understanding, helping, accepting responsibility, and working together for the common good.
- Where the judgment about, and the definition of, an individual's success includes his or her dedication and responsibility to consider the common good, consider the interests of others, be a better citizen, family member, society member, colleague, and friend.

Concept

To offer *The Ethical Framework* as a recognized and widely known set of basic behavioral norms to become:

- A foundation on which to build daily living.
- A carry-around tool to stimulate thought and reflection about daily behavior and to foster the need to be conscious of ethical and moral beliefs as one makes daily decisions.

Beliefs

1. The American people have the capacity to attain a much higher level of harmony, unity, and well-being, both individually and as a nation.
2. Ethical daily living will foster:
 - Secure, dependable relationships
 - Psychological and spiritual well-being
 - Unity and collaboration
 - Harmony and peace
 - Reduction or elimination of conditions leading to, and core causes of most societal problems.

Who We Are

The Triangle Interfaith Alliance, based out of Raleigh, North Carolina, is composed of people of good will from diverse faiths and backgrounds who believe that the faith community as a whole should be a force for good. Our Nominating Committee strives to achieve as much diversity as possible to maintain religious, cultural, and racial diversity on our board and in our membership. There are about 30 board members, clergy and non-clergy, representing the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and Unitarian-Universalist religions. We are a tax exempt 501(C)(3) corporation. Begun in early 1996, we were incorporated in July 1998 as a North Carolina nonprofit corporation. We are an autonomous organization open to all people of good will. Our relationship with The Interfaith Alliance national office in Washington, D.C. involves information sharing and some cooperative efforts. The Alliance also partners with other organizations in achieving common goals. Desiring to be a unifying force in society with emphasis on agreement and positive attitudes, we focus on building common bonds around which all people can come together, work together, and learn together.

What We Are Doing

What this is

The Ethical Framework is a compact guide and resource that can provide everyone with a solid ethical and moral foundation on which to make daily decisions.

What the benefits are

For all who use it, the bottom line benefit will be achieving a higher level of peace and joy in their lives. For our country, accepting and living by *The Ethical Framework* can send a message throughout the world as to what kind of people we want to be.

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Vision for Tomorrow ... Blueprint for Today

Benefits for Everyone...

The American people have the capacity to attain a much higher level of harmony, unity, and well-being, as individuals and as a nation, than is evident now. The time has come when the nation needs a common bond that brings out the highest and best in **all** of us. *The Ethical Framework* can be that common bond and can awaken everyone's capacity for ethical and moral living.

The *Framework* is a pathway that stimulates thought and reflection about ethical and moral values in making daily decisions. Every day, our decisions on what to do and what not to do affect family, friends, coworkers, and others, and sometimes even our community or country. Interaction with others, to achieve the best for all, means relying on each other. We all wish and expect to receive the respect, understanding, trust, and help that we need from others. But we have to remember, we must give others the same respect, understanding, trust, and help that we expect from them.

Can our society and culture achieve a spirit of harmony and better relationships? Could people be unselfish and considerate, rejecting unethical and immoral behavior and refraining from doing harmful things to each other? Imagine ever-increasing commitment to be a better person, better citizen, family member, colleague or friend. Imagine compliance with laws, not because of fear of penalty, but because laws are for everyone's benefit and obeying them is the right thing to do. Imagine a less stressful life; fulfilling, healthy, and happy.

Huge benefits in our human relationships would follow, and most societal problems in this country would be reduced or eliminated. The nation would not allow the conditions that cause poverty; violence and crime would simply not be an option; individuals would always unselfishly consider others and the common good. People would work together to achieve racial, religious, and ethnic harmony. In addition, the core causes of broken families, drug problems, and homelessness would be identified and reduced or eliminated.

From a realistic and practical perspective, as ethical and moral living becomes an important part of our society and culture and the cornerstone of our national way of life, **everyone benefits**. Focus will be on caring and responsibility, reinforced and supported by mutual help, kindness, generosity, respect, understanding, and trust. This type of society can become reality through widespread study and use of *The Ethical Framework*. The *Framework* fosters a society that can achieve this entire vision and that will move our country to a level of harmony and community worthy of worldwide emulation.

Today's Reality...

Our country is proud of a history of many individuals doing noble and great things. In times of catastrophe and emergency, people unselfishly rise to the occasion to help each other and other peoples. However, we cannot deny the natural tension between self-interest and the common good. Many forces in our system and culture promote self-interest to the detriment of the common good. Self-interest in America has reached the point of entitlement, where it is acceptable to pursue individual rights and personal interest without regard to the effect on others or the community. Ethical and moral behavior are often trivialized and rarely rewarded. Our society knows the most powerful and wealthiest people—political and business leaders, sports and entertainment professionals, media celebrities, and other such achievers—but does not identify or honor persons who are the most ethical and moral.

Clear behavioral expectations and responsibilities are a missing link in our democracy. Without norms for commonly expected ethical and moral behavior, there is little if any expectation or law that behavior must be ethical, responsible, or fair, *as long as it is legal*. People, even our leaders, defend unethical and immoral behavior by saying "I've done nothing illegal." Nevertheless, behavior without a moral or ethical conscience, whether legal or illegal, is often hurtful to others and to the common good.

The media bombard the public daily with incidents of killing, abuse of people and power, and with cheating, misleading, lying, theft, and greed. Our nation's societal problems include poverty, violence, broken families, and every imaginable barrier to positive human development and a more satisfying and successful life. Finding ways to get what is wanted by intentionally violating the intent and spirit of laws is a common occurrence. All of this is evidence that our society needs something to offset the acceptance of unethical and immoral human behavior.

Despite initiatives for study and change, societal ills are still with us. Society seems to accept these problems as inevitable, even though many people would like to see changes. No one should accept the unacceptable. Everyone needs to find and use a different approach that transcends the forces creating our societal ills, thereby building an irresistible force for an ethical, moral society.

The Ethical Framework... What is it?

The Ethical Framework, a compilation of simple, easy to understand ethical and moral principles, is based on the following underlying precepts:

Respect for the basic dignity and worth of every person.

Consideration for the interest of others and the common good.

Consideration of all actions in terms of desirable ethical and moral outcomes, rather than on solely legal, or convenient results.

The principles focus on taking into account the common good and considering the interests of other individuals as well as your own. They are applicable to all people, whether acting for themselves or for others, or representing organizations such as business, government, religious, civic, or charities.

THE GOLDEN RULE ...
an impossible ideal?

Ethics and morals are to some degree already planted in both secular and religious cultures. Most Americans know “The Golden Rule” which says we should do to others what we would want done to ourselves. Many people do intend to consider effects on others, on the community, and on the nation; however many others do not. Unfortunately, knowing what is right is often not transformed into doing what is right. As we experience our lives, we may not think of the ethical and moral implications as we make daily decisions. To live by high ideals in the midst of daily contrary forces is very difficult or impossible. Now we have *The Ethical Framework* as a carry-around tool and constant reminder of the need to be conscious of ethical and moral outcomes of our daily decisions.

The Ethical Framework does not pretend to replace “The Golden Rule,” “The Ten Commandments,” or any religious teaching; nor does it take away from parents the responsibility for teaching ethics and morals. The decline of ethics and morals in our nation indicates that parents and religion could use some support. *The Ethical Framework* is supportive of, and reinforces secular and religious cultures. It should be viewed as a tool to assist parents and religious and civic groups as well as all individuals in implementing the Golden Rule or other ethical and moral teachings by which they seek to live.

Kindness in your face

Kindness in your eyes

Kindness in your smile

Kindness in your warm greeting

Adopted from Mother Teresa

Some Varieties of the Golden Rule...

Secular: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Secular Modern Variation: “Do unto others as they would want done unto them.” This modern variation recognizes that all people are different. Therefore it requires us to do to people, not what we would want them to do to us, but what they would want us to do to them, within the boundaries of reason and good sense.

...

African Traditional: “One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts.” —Yoruba proverb (Nigeria)

Bahá’í: “Desire not for anyone the things that ye would not desire for yourselves.”
—Gleanings from the writings of Bahá’u’lláh LXVI

Buddhism: “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” —Udana-Varga, 5:18

Christianity: “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you.” —Bible, Matthew 7.12

Confucianism: “Tsekung asked, ‘Is there one word that can serve as a principal of conduct for life?’ Confucius replied, ‘It is the word *shu*-reciprocity: Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.’”
—Analects 15.23 (ca 500 BC)

Hinduism: “This is the sum of duty. Do not unto others that which would cause you pain if done to you.”
—Mahabharata 5:1517

Islam: “Act with people the way you would like them to act with you.” —Al-Malati, Kitab al-Tanbih, Attributed to Muhammad

Jainism: “One should treat all beings as he himself would be treated.” —Agamas, Sutrakritanga, 1.10, 1-3

Judaism: (Positive) “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” —Bible, Leviticus 19.18
(Negative) “What is hateful to you, do not do to others.” —Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Native American: “Respect for all life is the foundation.” —The Great Law of Peace

Sikhism: “Treat others as thou wouldst be treated thyself.” —Adi Granth

Taoism: “Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.”
—T’ai Shang Kan Ying P’ien

Zoroastrianism: “That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself.” —Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94:5

Guidelines For Use

1. Because life is complex, the principles are not absolutes and are not intended to be an exhaustive or complete list. Rather than solve problems, the principles provide a foundation that empowers individuals to build solutions and guide daily living. *The Ethical Framework* stimulates thought and reflection about our daily behavior and helps us to be conscious of our own ethical and moral beliefs as we make daily decisions. Although the *Framework's* principles remain constant, how we apply them can vary depending on the situation. Solving the complicated issues or providing answers to every possible ethical question is, therefore, still each individual's responsibility.

When questions arise, we may ask, "What am I doing and why am I doing it?" "Would I want everyone to act this way in a similar situation?" "Would I feel comfortable if I had to explain what I do?" "Which of the *Framework's* principles can I use and apply?" "Which of the principles supports my actions or feelings?" Individuals are encouraged to consider each set of circumstances and use common sense, reason, and good judgment to apply the principles. They should be used only for worthwhile purposes and for good expected outcomes, not followed thoughtlessly in every case. For instance, exceptions to these principles may occur if innocent people will be hurt unnecessarily.

2. While the *Framework* is intended primarily to guide our own behavior, it can also be used to identify and question unethical and immoral behavior of others, especially persons in power such as those in corporations or government. Deviating from the *Framework* can result in the need to give compelling reasons to justify actions and the risk of public or private criticism from others.
3. No part of the *Framework* stands alone. All parts are integral to its letter and spirit. Taken as a whole, the *Framework* benefits us most by helping to develop an attitude that will move us successfully through life. Where two principles lead to contradictory results, we should reach a solution that is within the spirit of the entire *Framework*. Following the basic intent would eliminate any tendency to seek "loopholes" or avoidance techniques.
4. Although ethical behavior is often ignored in conditions such as war, oppression by dictators, and political expediency, society should not excuse such practice.
5. The ways and situations in which the *Framework* can be used are unlimited and will be up to the imagination and creativity of users. In addition to personal use by everyone, the *Framework* is a teaching tool and resource to develop, support, or reinforce a variety of programs, workshops, documents, and discussion groups. This could include personal and family development, character education in schools, religious education, and codes of ethics and conduct for individuals, families, and organizations.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER 1

**Be FOR people
rather than AGAINST people.**

Consider others. Consider the common good.

1. **Before deciding an issue**, consider the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of those who are directly affected by the decision. Give them a voice in the process.
2. **Listen carefully to others.** Try to understand their perspectives, and why they think the way they do.
3. **Speak the truth.** Do not spread false information or rumors. But do not provide true information that would *unnecessarily* hurt innocent people.
4. **Keep confidences** and confidential information.
5. **Have respect** for every person, including yourself.
6. **Be open** to new information and new ways of thinking.
7. **Seek the facts** before evaluating the behavior of others.
8. **Refuse to hate**, dehumanize or demonize, discriminate, or stereotype.
9. **Condemn and reject:**
 - **injustice**, oppression, persecution, cruelty, tyranny, brutality, abuse.
 - **all exploitation:** taking advantage of people and systems for selfish social, economic, sexual, or political purposes.
 - **the abuse of or excessive use of power** in any situation.
 - **harassment** and invasion of privacy.
10. **Balance self-interest with consideration** for consequences to others and the common good.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER 2

Treat people with care and concern, strive for harmony.

Build caring, trusting relationships.

1. **Be kind:** humane, helpful, accommodating, obliging, assisting others.
2. **Be caring and compassionate:** show regard and concern for others.
3. **Be unselfish:** share, think of others and consider their needs and desires.
4. **Be empathetic:** understand others' ideas and feelings from their perspective by imagining yourself in their place.
5. **Be honest:** (*two meanings*) *a*) frank, open, above board, correct false impressions and wrong or misleading information. *b*) refuse to steal, cheat or take credit for anything to which you are not entitled. Do not deceive.
6. **Be truthful:** correct, accurate, complete, refuse to lie, deceive, mislead, or omit part of the truth.
7. **Be trustworthy and worthy of confidence:** keep your word and your commitments; be reliable and dependable; take responsibility for your behavior; admit and correct wrongs and make restitution.
8. **Be fair and equitable:** reasonable, just, and even handed; apply rules equally to all people without favoritism.
9. **Be respectful of others:** polite, courteous, and civil; how we treat others tells how we respect ourselves.
10. **Be forgiving:** do not hold grudges, or seek revenge or retribution.
11. **Be willing to look honestly at your own behavior and when it is wrong, admit it:** demonstrate remorse, be truly sorry for what was wrong and express regret and sorrow, show determination not to do such wrongs again; expect and accept the consequences.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER 3

Respect the wonder of life.

Life is precious and sacred.

1. **Refuse to put others at risk** without their knowledge and consent.
2. **Refuse to cause bodily harm or death** knowingly or purposefully, except in self-defense or to defend others from a clear and present threat.
3. **Demonstrate care,** concern for, and preservation of all animal and plant life.



PRINCIPLE NUMBER 4

Accept responsibilities as members of society.

Obligations to yourself, to others, to society.

1. **Exercise care,** concern, preservation and conservation toward the environment, the earth, space beyond the earth's atmosphere, and all natural resources.
2. **Contribute to the common good**—be involved in doing helpful things for others, for the community, and for the country.
3. **Respect the property** of others.
4. **Fulfill our public trust.** If we are relied on by the public for products, services, information, or any other reason, we have a responsibility to protect the public's interests and well-being by maintaining a high standard of ethical and moral behavior. Examples include people such as those in government, media, religion, health, safety, education, business, and other professions.
5. **Support society's obligation** to provide every person access to a decent quality of life:
 - access to food and water, clothing, shelter, health care, education, and job training.
 - access to meaningful employment with fair and sufficient compensation, as well as associated transportation and child care as needed.
6. **Support society by being the best** that you can be; by making the effort to:
 - provide yourself with the best possible education and skills including those needed to obtain the most productive employment.
 - be a good citizen, family member, colleague, and friend.

Societal Problems

Positive Changes Needed

Our society has experienced tremendous economic, scientific, and technological growth and advances. However, it is increasingly clear that such accomplishments have not created the utopia that many of us expected. The current state of affairs reveals itself in a large variety of interrelated negative symptoms and problems.

It does not have to be this way. To make positive changes, we need to find new alternative strategies that prevent or eliminate the underlying conditions that lead to or cause these problems and symptoms.

Do we want to create a national culture and society that:

- promotes the overall well-being of people?
- promotes working together in harmony for the common good and brings out the best in people?
- promotes a climate of mutual trust and confidence, friendship, caring, and good will?
- produces contented people whose lives provide fulfillment and inner satisfaction?

A. Barriers to the personal development of people

1. Poverty
2. High school dropouts
3. Weaknesses in public education
4. Inadequate or no health care insurance
5. Divorce
6. No time to build loving relationships
7. Little or no family time
8. Two wage-earners required for a family
9. Increase in number of one-parent families.

B. Bringing out the worst in people

1. Violence, as a way to resolve conflict and solve problems
2. Child abuse
3. Spousal abuse
4. Children killing children
5. Drug abuse
6. Crime
7. No time to be a good parent or spouse
8. Teen pregnancy
9. Decline of ethics and morals
10. Absorption with, and acting out of, self-interest without regard for the effect on others and the common good.

C. Climate of cynicism, hostility, and contempt creates adversarial and divisive feelings

1. Poor race relations
2. Huge disparities in earnings and wealth
3. Lack of confidence, respect, and trust in people and government
4. Success measured by money, power, and material possessions.

D. People stressed and depressed with empty lives without purpose

1. Suicide
2. Working long hours under stressful conditions
3. Working full-time in bottom tier wage levels that do not provide the minimum necessities of life
4. Living from paycheck to paycheck
5. Feeling insignificant
6. Lack of personal and job satisfaction
7. Feeling unfulfilled because of a life without meaning or purpose.

Note: Symptoms and problems are interrelated but, for purposes of organizing the presentation, they are divided into four categories.

Expected Outcomes

Better Lives

Better Communities

Better Country

Following the *Framework's* principles will encourage the moral nature of human beings and bring out the best in people, leading to a more caring, respectful, harmonious, equitable, and safe society. The outcomes below will become part of our nation's culture. The quality of life in America will improve, and ethical and moral principles will be recognized as major components of personal success and good citizenship.

Secure, Dependable Relationships

- a) Mutual Confidence
- b) Trust
- c) Believability
- d) Credibility
- e) Respect

Psychological and Spiritual Well-Being

- a) Self-Confidence
- b) Self-Esteem
- c) Good Feeling
- d) Less Stress
- e) Personal Fulfillment
- f) Personal Satisfaction
- g) Sense of Community and Connection

Unity

- a) Collaboration and Ability to Work with Others
- b) Mutual Help
- c) Cooperation
- d) Respectful and Thoughtful Discussion
- e) Communication and Dialogue
- f) Better Decisions and Error Prevention

Harmony

- a) Peace
- b) Understanding
- c) Unity
- d) Good Will
- e) Friendship
- f) Mutual Acceptance of Diversity
- g) Forgiveness and Healing

What You Can Do

• **First**, as you read the *Framework* from beginning to end, please give it careful thought. It is designed to be easily carried so that you may refer to it in your daily living.

• **Second**, you can show your support by helping to promote and distribute the *Framework*. Spread the word and help people and organizations get as many copies as needed. Encourage your family, friends, and co-workers to get a copy. Introduce and distribute it to your employer, PTA, house of worship, community organization—as a teaching tool and resource for ethics workshops, discussion groups, and other programs and documents.

• **Third**, use it daily in your personal and professional life. If you are a business or community leader, endorse and support it publicly.

How to get additional copies:

Everyone, individuals and organizations, can obtain additional copies of *The Ethical Framework* brochure and associated resource materials from the Triangle Interfaith Alliance. For as long as possible, there will be no charge for the brochure or materials but contributions are appreciated to help defray costs. To place an order, please use the request form included with this brochure, or a copy of this form available at our web site.

You may also download PDF files through our web site. A simple version, which can be printed out in standard 8¹/₂ x 11 format, is available for personal use. For organizations who wish to print the *Framework* brochures in quantity, we have posted the press-ready file (2-color, 2-sides, 22x17 inches).

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