

## Week 3

# Personal principles

Anyone who plays the game of golf knows there are certain principles which are key to playing well: keep your head still, don't swing your hips from side to side, at set up ensure your feet, knees, hips and shoulders are parallel and aimed toward the target, address the shot - not the ball, maintain a consistent tempo on your swing whatever club you use and imagine your shot being a success before you hit it. Every golfer might also have their own principles that they need to apply to improve their game. Perhaps they hook the ball, so need to concentrate on swinging down the line of the shot, want to hit the ball further and need to make a fuller turn of their shoulders or they jerk at putts so need to concentrate on a smooth follow through.

These principles are a guide to a golfer of the key things they must do when they're out on the golf course if they want to play well. By keeping these in mind and applying them as much as they can they will play to their highest level.

In the same way as golfers use certain principles for playing good golf, we too can find principles which will help us to live a better life. These are what I call *personal principles*. Like with golf, they might be general principles used by many people, perhaps as outlined in a personal development book or religious text, or they could be designed specifically for that individual to address specific issues they have in their life. Personal principles are a set of rules, attitudes and behaviours that you will use to guide what you do and how you do it in order to make your life happy and successful. They act as a reminder of what you stand for, the approach to life you wish to take and the values which you aim to live your life by.

Personal principles can be beneficial in five ways:

### **1. To support your Life Direction**

Personal principles can be designed to directly support your aims in life. One business person whose long term aim was to be the CEO of his company, outlined the following personal principles to use at work:

- I will do whatever it takes to get the job done.
- I will be a people person.
- I will make intelligent decisions.
- I will be proactive.
- I will be courageous.

Now when he is at work he uses these principles to guide what he does. He commented that since he has been using these he has seen a dramatic change in how he works. He regularly puts forward new ideas and has been praised for his entrepreneurial approach. He often stays the late in the office to ensure projects are completed on time and even took the bold step of stating his long term intentions in his staff review, after which he was given the opportunity to move to a new role to widen his skill base.

### **2. To support your Key Values**

Personal principles can also be used to directly support your Key Values. If one of your Key Values is 'love', then you might set personal principles such as:

- to be kind to everyone I meet.
- to freely express my love.
- to connect with everyone I talk to.
- to appreciate the love I receive.

Someone with a Key Value of 'security' might set personal principles such as:

- to err on the side of caution when I make important decisions.
- to seek out and find friends who are trustworthy.
- to manage my finances each month to ensure I never spend more than I earn while investing for the future and my retirement.

The principles we set down become a guide for what we do and how we do it in life. By ensuring they are consistent with our Key Values we ensure the decisions we make lead us in the right long term direction in life.

### **3. To strengthen our identity**

In addition to our Key Values, we all have other values which are important to us and which we aim to live our by. These values help to make us who we are. Examples might be:

- to be honest.
- to be reliable.
- to be competitive.
- to be friendly.
- to be cheerful.
- to be faithful.
- to be supportive.
- to have fun.
- freedom for all.
- equal rights for all.
- it is wrong to eat meat.

Deciding on your own personal principles, writing them down and committing to live your life according to them is like setting your values in stone. We are making a clear statement of the type of person we are and what we stand for. When we come to make decisions in life these clear guiding principles ensure that the decisions we make on a day to day basis support who we are and strengthen our sense of identity. It is often people with clear values who know what they stand for and who are willing to stand up for what they believe who gain the respect of others and who make the best leaders. Clarifying exactly what you believe in will enable you to gain the same sense of power, assurance and respect possessed by the great leaders.

#### **4. To help us overcome weaknesses**

If we have specific weaknesses, we can set ourselves personal principles to help us directly overcome these. By committing to living our lives in a different way helps us to improve ourselves and how we live our lives.

One of the programme participants had always let people walk all over her, and she felt this was holding her back from really living the life she wanted. To help her overcome this I suggested she set herself a clear personal principle which she would live by and make a part of her life. The principle she came up with was: "I will stand up for what I believe is right and prioritise getting the final outcome which is right for me, while also trying to understand other people's views." By setting this personal principle she changed the rules of the game of life she was playing, and this made a dramatic difference to her.

#### **5. To build a successful and happy life.**

You can live by personal principles from any source, as long as you feel it is appropriate for you, and will support you in living a happy and successful life. It might be, for instance, that you have religious principles. A Christian principle such as 'Do unto others as you

would have done to yourself' might be one. This would be a good principle to uphold for anyone who wants to be caring and understanding of others. Hindu's believe in Karma - that what you do in this life will be reflected in subsequent lives. Again if you adopt this principle you might behave in a more caring and purposeful way. Even if you are not religious you might find some religious principles useful to apply in your own life.

You may also get principles from studies of successful people, so for instance, Stephen Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", or from biographies or inspiring television programmes or films. The measure to use to decide whether you should adopt it in your life is whether it will help you live a more fulfilled life, so take a look around and adopt principles which are right for you.

In the two sections below I outline a selection of principles outlined from two key sources. Firstly some of the key principles developed in the personal development field over recent years, and secondly, some of the key principles from two of the leading religions in the world. Review these, and where necessary do more of your own research, and then adopt and live by those which you feel will help you to improve your life.

## **Principles of effective living from the world of personal development**

### **NLP presuppositions**

NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) was born when it's founders John Grinder and Richard Bandler asked the simple yet fascinating question: "What is it that makes the difference between somebody who is merely competent at something and someone who excels at the same skill." The aim of NLP is to find the difference that makes that difference so that it can be learnt by anyone else.

Coming from this work are a set of what are known as presuppositions. These are attitudes which are found to be useful when doing NLP and when aiming to achieve excellence in any field. NLP doesn't say that you should necessarily believe that these presuppositions are true, just that you act as if they are true, experiment with them and learn from your experiences.

Here are a selection of the NLP presuppositions:

#### **1. The Map is not the Territory**

As humans we can never know reality. We can only know our perceptions of reality. When something happens in the world, we simply interpret that event in accordance with our own view as to what that means. Since we all have different perceptions, we all respond differently to the same external events. One person can go to a film and think that it was great. The next person go to the same film and hate it. The film (the territory) was exactly the same but the views people have about it (the maps) are different. By

recognising that no one map is right or wrong, we can start to embrace the differences between people, and respect people for their views even when they are different from our own. In NLP, when finding the reason why some people excel in a certain field we are simply finding the map that this person is using when they demonstrate this skill. By using this same map anyone else can achieve excellence in this field too.

## **2. There is no failure, only feedback**

There is no failure, only feedback; no mistakes, only results; no errors, only learning. Every experience may be viewed as an unprecedented opportunity to learn. Keeping this in mind in everything you do ensures you remain positive and motivated and will not be discouraged when things do not go your way. You will continually learn, develop yourself, and improve, until you achieve the result you want.

## **3. The meaning of your communication is the response you get**

You can only judge the success of your communication with others by the response you get from them. Remember that everyone has a different model of the world, so if the message you intend to convey is not getting through it's because you haven't been flexible enough in the way you are communicating. You need to try another way.

## **4. Be flexible**

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got. If what you are doing isn't working do something else!

## **5. You can not fail to communicate**

Remember that 93% of all communication is non-verbal. Whenever you are in the presence of others you are always communicating. What message are you giving out, and is it that the message you are intending to portray? You can also observe the non-verbal messages others are giving out to help you understand their true feelings. By observing, learning and using the cues of people close to you, you can understand better how they feel and use these to improve your communication with them.

## **6. All behaviour has a positive intention**

At some level all behaviour is (or at some time was) positively intended. It is or was perceived as appropriate given the point of view of that person. It is more productive to respond to people's positive intention than any problem that you may perceive in the behaviour itself.

A colleague at work would regularly ignore me for most of the day, even though we were in the same office. For a long time I focused on this, assumed he didn't like me and ignored him too. It was only when I thought about his positive intention behind ignoring

him and his behaviour changed. It wasn't a personal thing, as I had taken it to be. He largely ignored everyone. His focus was on working hard to get his job done. I could respect that and when I looked at his behaviour in this way I saw him in a different light. When I speak to him now I usually talk about work, ask him how it's going and have even passed on some tips from my own experience which he seems to appreciate. We're still not best buddies, but our relationship is positive and respectful, before it was non-existent.

## **7. If it's hard work reduce it down.**

Even complex tasks are manageable if taken one step at a time in component pieces.

### **Using the NLP presuppositions**

Again everyone is different, and different people will benefit from adopting different presuppositions into their life. One of the biggest changes I ever experienced in my life was when I adopted the presupposition that the Map is Not the Territory into my life. Use of the principle that everyone is different and should be accepted for that changed my whole perception of people around me. I became far more tolerant of different views and far more ready to listen and understand them. I stopped expecting the people close to me to change themselves to fit with my view of the world and started accepting and appreciating people for who they are. Which of these presuppositions might you find beneficial to use in your life?

### **Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**

One of the most famous set of principles of recent times is Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. The reason I believe that they are so successful is that they are simple, so that people can easily apply them, yet they are also very effective. Use these in your life, and you will undoubtedly see an improvement.

#### **1. Be proactive**

We all have the power to choose our response to the outside world. We don't have to simply react to outside events in an automatic fashion. Instead we should choose to live proactively, in accordance with our own personal values, to direct our own life and *take responsibility* for making our own lives the way we want them to be.

#### **2. Begin with the end in mind**

Start any task with a clear understanding of the destination you wish to reach. This will enable you to understand where you are going and so define the small steps that you need to take to ensure you are always moving in the right direction.

#### **3. Put first things first**

**Organise your time around priorities** so that you spend it undertaking the activities which will truly add value to your life and through this enable you to live the dreams you have envisaged for your life. Don't be a slave to all those urgent activities which must be done today, remember and do the activities which are important to your happiness and well-being in the long term..

#### **4. Think win/win**

Constantly seek mutual benefit in all relations with other people, so that a solution is found which about which everyone can feel positive and good. If there is a loser in any situation, be it at work or at home, with friends or family, then in the long term the relationship will deteriorate and everyone will lose in the end.

#### **5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood**

One of our greatest needs as humans is to be understood, affirmed, validated and be appreciated. When communicating with another human we can greatly improve our relationships by listening intently to what people say and really understanding things from their perspective. Once people know you understand their perspective, then they'll be willing to listen to yours, especially now that your views take into account the understanding of their situation. Now, you are truly communicating in the most effective way.

#### **6. Synergise**

Synergy is where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts or  $1 + 1 = 3$ . Two companies might synergise by merging together. One brings a well known brand name, the other a great product - together they can capitalise on both these strengths to make more profits than if both companies worked as separate entities. We can synergise not just in business but in all parts of our life, working with the people around us to get a result which is better than if each of us were working independently.

#### **7. Sharpen the saw**

Sharpening the saw means to preserve and enhance our greatest asset, ourselves, by seeking to maintain our physical, mental, spiritual and social/emotional selves. We all need to rest and recuperate after stressful periods and events. Without this it is hard to get the most from life. We can also improve ourselves so that everything else becomes better and easier in the future.

#### **Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People**

In what is now a classic book, written in 1936, Dale Carnegie outlines his principles for developing good relationships with people and influencing their behaviour. Their effectiveness is highlighted by the fact this book has sold over 16 million copies and is still

selling today. The following are a selection of principles taken from this book which will help you to deal effectively with people and develop better relationships:

- 1) Don't criticise, condemn or complain.
- 2) Give honest and sincere appreciation.
- 3) Arouse in the other person an eager want. (To influence people, find what is important to them, and ensure that you meet those needs in meeting your own).
- 4) Become genuinely interested in other people.
- 5) Smile.
- 6) Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
- 7) Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
- 8) Talk in terms of the other person's interests
- 9) Make the other person feel important, and do it sincerely.

### **Marcia Grad - The Charisma Creed**

One of my favourite sets of principles is outlined in Marcia Grad's book "Charisma". These are a set of beliefs which we should adopt if we want to enjoy life to the full, be self-confident and attract others. Her "Charisma Creed" is as follows:

Without self-valuations, unrealistic expectations, or delusions, I will try to:

- Accept life just as it is - unpredictable, challenging, sometimes trying, but filled with a myriad of opportunities for self-fulfilment.
- Accept and like others just as they are - making no attempt to judge, impress, police, control, manipulate, convince or change them.
- Accept, like, trust, be loyal to, depend upon, and believe in myself as I am - ever-changing, learning, growing, getting better.
- Be aware of and fulfil my evolving goals and dreams, often re-evaluating whether or not my chosen path is still making me happy.

- Live and love fully with every once of my being, knowing that I may occasionally be hurt, but realising that that, too is part of the full experience of living.
- Extract from each day and each moment every joyful morsel - remembering the past and planning for the future, but dwelling on only now, today, and how I can make it the best today I've ever known.

### **The management of life - Six steps to success**

Of course I can't leave this section without outlining the principles on which the "Management of Life" is based:

- 1) Identify what will give you fulfilment in life, so you know what to guide your life towards.
- 2) Evaluate how well you are getting this at present - the starting point on your journey.
- 3) Set objectives which support you in being fulfilled today, and which motivate and focus you towards achieving your desires for the future.
- 4) Plan how you are going to achieve these objectives, so that you work towards them in the most effective way.
- 5) Organise your time so that you:
  - consistently take the actions you have planned.
  - live each day to the full, whatever your circumstances.
- 6) Regularly review your progress, so you continuously learn from your experiences and can change your plans to ensure they continue to move you towards the future you desire.

### **Religious principles**

Religions offer many important ways to live that help us to be better people and improve our lives. I have selected some of the key principles outlined in two of the major religions, Christianity and Islam, which you might find useful to apply to your life. These are by no means the complete list of principles outlined by these religions, each of which is very large, simply a selection which people might consider to adopt as part of their lives whether they are religious or not. If you are religious, this might be a good time to review your religious beliefs and create your own set of personal principles based on these.

### **Christianity**

Christianity centres around the work of Jesus, who Christians believe to be the Messiah or Son of God. Christian belief and teaching centres around the bible, which consists of two main parts, the Old Testament (as also used in Judaism) which outline the teachings prior to Christ, and the New Testament which outline life and teachings of Jesus and his followers. The following principles come from these New Testament teachings.

**1. “Always treat others as you would like them to treat you”  
Matthew 7:12**

If you wish that someone be truthful to you, you must first of all be truthful to them. If you want anybody to love you, you must first love them. If you want people to see you as a truthful, you have to start believing others. If you want anybody to respect you, respect not only him, but every other person. If you want another person to humble himself, you have to be humble. If you want your children to listen to your advice, you also have to listen to them.

**2. Be trustworthy**

“The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted also in great; and the man who is dishonest in little things is dishonest also in great things” Luke 16:10

**3. Contribute to the lives of others**

“Whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all - like the Son of Man; he did not come to be served, but to serve and to give up his life as a ransom for many” Matthew 20:26-27

**4. Forgive others**

“Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him your left.” Matthew 5, 39

**5. Don’t judge others**

“Pass no judgement, and you will not be judged. For as you judge others, so you will yourself be judged, and whatever measure you deal out to others will be dealt back to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye, with never a thought for the great plank in your own? Or how can you say to your brother “Let me take the speck out of your eye” when all the time there is that plank in your own. You hypocrite. First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s.” Matthew 7: 1-5

**6. Show humility**

“When he noticed how the guests were trying to secure the places of honour, he spoke to them in a parable; “when you are asked by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the place of honour. It may be that some person more distinguished than yourself has been invited; and the host will come and say to you, “Give this man your seat.” Then you will look foolish as you begin to take the lowest place. No, when you receive an invitation, go sit down in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he will say, “come up higher, my friend.” Then all your fellow guests will see the respect in which you are held. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 14: 7-11

## **Islam**

Islam means peace with oneself, with others and devotion to God. The Muslim believes in all the prophets of all times including Abraham, Moses and Jesus but it's main principles are outlined in the Koran, a text which they believe was revealed by God (Allah) to the last prophet of Islam, Muhammed where people are taught to do good to others and purify themselves by carrying out its teachings.

It is based around 5 key principles the “Pillars of Islam”.

### **1) The testimony of faith**

This means to believe in just one God, Allah, and worshipping no other God, and in the writings of the Koran, using this as a guide to life.

### **2) Prayer**

Prayer is performed five times in the day and the night. It is considered an energising charge which people need to do ensure they do the right things and act in the right ways.

The Koran says “Consider a river running by your door in which you wash yourself five times a day. Would that spare any soiled spot on your body? (His listeners) said: “Certainly not” He said: So do the five daily prayers with which Allah effaces the sins.” It also says “Seek help through patience and prayer”

Anyone, Muslim or not, might find benefit from taking time a few times during the day to be thankful and to find your own peace.

### **3) Zakat**

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam. It is a financial act of worship, in which each year a certain percentage of an individual's wealth is taken to be given to the poor. This ensures the poor in society are looked after and ensures the donors are generous and giving of themselves to others.

The Koran says "Never will charity diminish the wealth, rather it augments it. "

It is seen as a way to achieve social mutual responsibility amongst Muslims so that wealthy people sympathise with the poor and the poor love the wealthy.

#### 4) **Fasting**

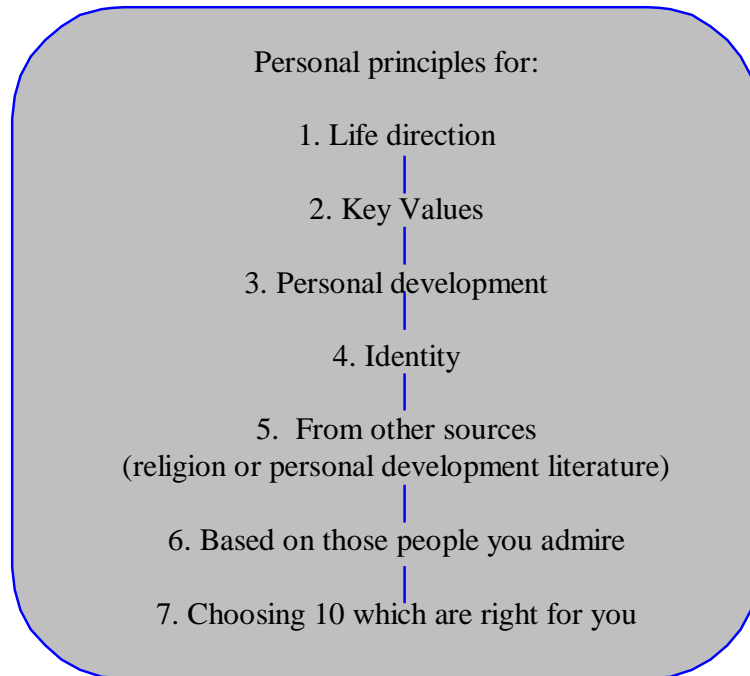
For one month during Ramadan Muslim's fast from dusk to dawn. The aim is to keep them focused on their beliefs and strengthen their resolve and spirit. It also aims to ensure people appreciate what they have while enabling them to better face the challenges that life will inevitably throw at them.

#### 5) **Hajj**

Every Muslim of sufficient means is required to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca once in his or her lifetime. The main purpose aim is to reinforce to God (Allah) that the Muslim has indeed lived according to the Message in the Koran. This also serves to aimed to train people in self-restraint, endurance, resisting hunger, while they endure the hardship of the journey, leave their family behind, as well as other things they desire. Muslim's come together and worship in the same clothes to enforce their sense of oneness and sameness.

### **Finding your own personal principles**

I suggest that at any one time, you focus on just *10 personal principles*. If you have any more you begin to lose focus. There is just too much to concentrate on. These should be appropriate for your current life situation, and can be amended as you feel is right. If you are about to go on a diet you may like to set down a personal principle as a rule for yourself just while you are on the diet; "I eat healthily" perhaps. You might also like to change a personal principle once you feel your behaviour is so automatic that there is no need further benefit from having it as part of your mission statement.

**Exercise 1 - Your personal principles**

1. Re-read your life direction. What personal principles could you adopt which would help you to live your life in accordance with this direction?
2. Review your Key Values. What personal principles could you adopt in your life which would help you to live these even more than you do at the moment?
3. What are your own key areas of personal development in your life at the moment? What principles could you adopt which would support this development?
4. What values do you stand for which you would like to make a stronger part of your life and your character?
5. What other principles, perhaps from religion or personal development literature might you find beneficial to incorporate into your life.
6.
  - (i) Think of 3 people who do you admire and respect?
  - (ii) What personal principles would you expect each of these people to have?
  - (iii) Which of these might you find useful to incorporate in your own life?
7. Reviewing all the principles you have noted down, write into your mission proforma the 10 which you feel would support you most in your life at the moment, remembering that these can be changed whenever you feel this is appropriate.

**Example - My personal principles**

My personal principles address factors which I believe are important to the effective management of life, as well as principles which I know will help me focus on the key areas of my own personal development. They are as follows

1. To set long term goals on a yearly basis and review my progress towards these every month.
2. To create a plan every month to move me towards the achievement of my long term goals
3. To plan each day so that I get the most from it.
4. To be warm and friendly wherever I go and with everyone I meet.
5. I will give genuine praise and appreciation wherever I can.
6. To show genuine concern about what is happening in other people's lives.
7. To remember that there is no failure only feedback.
8. Perseverance towards making my Key Values more and more a part of my life. To learn from life's experiences and improve my life in an ongoing way.
9. To be courageous.
10. My family, my happiness, my work.

The first three principles are key ones to support my own adoption of the principles of the management of life. I know that with regular goal setting, planning and review I will ensure I get the most from my life, and these personal principles state my commitment to make this a part of my life.

Personal principles 4-6 specifically address a key area of importance for me - to develop warm relationships with a wide variety of people. These principles help me to maintain this focus in whatever I do. They help me to incorporate these key techniques of improving relations with people into my life.

Principle 7 helps me to keep in mind that everyone must fail if they are going to be successful, and not to get down when I fail but to see it as a positive learning experience.

Principle 8 reminds me that in the long term it is living my Key Values which are the ultimate guide to my life. Using these to guide my life will bring me long term fulfilment.

Principle 9 helps me to overcome my tendency to choose the less risky option. With courage in what I choose to do and the way I deal with people I get more out of life, and am true to myself and who I am.

Principle 10 is a list of my priorities in life. I have not always got these priorities right in the past so incorporating them into my personal principles helps me to ensure I remember these in the future.

These principles are a rock in my life. A guiding point. They express me, who I am, what I wish to live by, and the key things on which I feel I need to focus to make my life better. They touch my heart. I feel truly connected to them. They give me power.

If you have yet to do so, experience for yourself the power of having your own set of personal principles. Find your own, commit to them, use them and change your life for the better.

### **Living your personal principles**

By defining your own set of personal principles you will be clear about your personal beliefs, values and approach to life. These will define you and the life you will live and drive you towards your goals.

Review your personal principles regularly (a minimum of once a week and preferably each day) to reinforce them and evaluate how well you are performing against them. They are a force for your life - use them.