

The Principle of Respect

The Principle of Respect is the acceptance that every other person is a person just like you. That they are all individuals who are trying to survive and do the best they can with what they have to work with. The Principle of Respect is to accept that everyone is one of "us" and not just a member of a group of "them". To respect someone is to recognize that they have intrinsic value and to accept all individuals as fellow members of humanity.

We are a religion that gives respect and expects respect. Respect is the basis for the {In:Principle of Inclusiveness}, the {In:Principle of Peace}, and the {In:Principle of Compassion}. We honor the individual and we expect others to honor us. To us a stranger is just a friend who we haven't yet met.

Respect is also the core of the {In:Vocabulary of Peace} and it undermines the {In:Vocabulary of War}. To respect a person isn't to agree with them or to give any approval to what they are into. But it does require that you think of them as a fellow human being who is a member of the human community and deserves a chance to establish a peaceful relationship. When you respect someone you personalize them, recognize their {In:original virtue} and identify with who they are. We give respect, and we expect to be respected. You are not a "them", you are an "us". We are an "us" too.

The Principle of Respect doesn't mean that you have to have respect for what other people believe in. Much of what other religions believe comes under the {In:Principle of Bullshit}. Respect means respect for the individual. We respect their personhood. We respect their needs. We respect that they are like us, that they have families, are part of a community of people that they care about, and that they are searching to do the right thing. Our position is that people are born with {In:Original Virtue} and that everyone can be improved if we all work to {In:Principle of Positive Evolution 'Evolve Forward'} together.

One of the purposes of the Principle of Respect is to undermine war. One of the steps to starting a war is to demonize your enemy. "They" are all terrorists, criminals, evil people, who deserve death because they have rejected God, committed unforgivable sins, or have inferior ancestry. "We" are the "chosen ones" who are morally superior and therefore we are legitimate and they are not. They are vermin to be exterminated. They are all alike and even if we kill their innocent children, they would have just grown up to be one of them.

Respect precludes this kind of thinking. It's harder to slaughter people when you humanize them as individuals. A dead child is no longer "collateral damage" but a person who was just yesterday playing in the sand with her friends and going to school to learn. Respect undermines hatred and the need for revenge.

It would be easy for us Realists to say, "Look at all the wars religion has started. If we exterminate all the Theists then the problem goes away." But if we do that then we become like them, locked in continuous slaughter killing each other for thousands of years. Do we want to do that? Clearly not! Instead of exterminating them, we can help them evolve away from the mistake of their past into a better future.

Respect is the first step in building a society where we are all "us" and there are no "thems". Respect means taking the time to understand other people and comprehending their point of view. Respect is to figure out what we have in common and to find a way to build on that.

Respect often leads to mutual respect. When we show respect for others then it is human nature for them to want to respect us. So even though we might be Infidels and destined to burn in Hell forever, they still like us and learn from us, and gives us the opportunity to learn from them. We can use respect to lay the foundations for a new cultural paradigm to form the basis for a world community.

