

# Guiding Principles

## What is a Guiding Principle?

A guiding principle is a positive, general principle that becomes an important foundation for the conduct of behavior, both individually and in relationships with others. Guiding principles are beliefs that most people would agree with because they are viewed as socially appropriate and inherently valuable, such as the idea to "be responsible." Guiding principles are qualities that are naturally viewed as leading to higher level functioning, creating positive relationships with others, and promoting a civil society.

Through the research efforts of the International Center, 12 guiding principles have been identified as key principles upon which to base a character education program. Collectively, they are referred to as the Twelve Guiding Principles of Exceptional Character.

## The 12 Guiding Principles of Exceptional Character

- **Adaptability** - The ability and willingness to change. To put oneself in harmony with changed circumstances. To be ready and willing to adjust as necessary to the changes in people and circumstances that arise in daily life.
- **Compassion** - Kindness. The desire to help others in distress. To show kindness and concern for others in distress by offering help whenever possible.
- **Contemplation** - Giving serious consideration to something. To think things through with proper care before taking action.
- **Courage** - Bravery. The willingness to put one's beliefs into practice, the capacity to meet danger without giving way to fear. To face difficulty or danger and express your beliefs even if you are afraid.
- **Honesty** - Truthfulness, sincerity. The act or condition of never deceiving, stealing, or taking advantage of the trust of others. To be truthful in all that you do and never deceive, steal, or take advantage of the trust of others.
- **Initiative** - Eagerness to do something. To take responsible action on your own, without prompting from others.
- **Loyalty** - Faithfulness, dependability. The quality of being faithful to another person in the performance of duty; adhering to a contract with another person. To show others that you are dependable when you have a commitment to them.
- **Optimism** - Positive beliefs. The inclination to take a hopeful view or think that all will work out for the best. To strive to be positive in your beliefs about yourself, others, and the future.
- **Perseverance** - Hard work. The quality of trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties.
- **Respect** - Regard, value, admire, appreciate. Special esteem or consideration in which one holds another person or thing. To show regard for yourself, others, and the world around you.
- **Responsibility** - Accountability. To consider oneself answerable for something. To demonstrate that you consider yourself to be accountable for your actions and that you follow through on your commitments.
- **Trustworthiness** - Reliability. Dependable, deserving of trust and confidence.