

TODAY

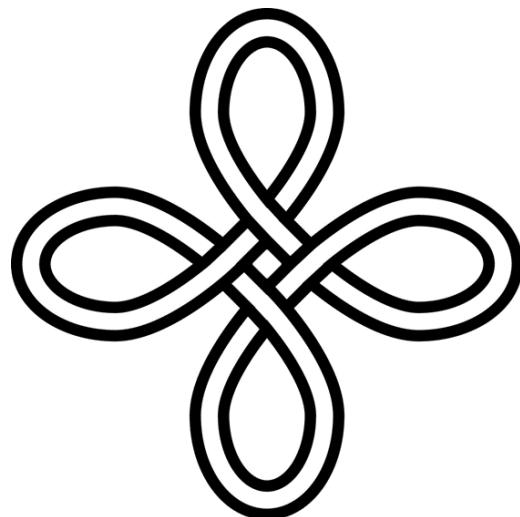
A Philosophy

On

Happiness & Moral Behaviour

In the pursuit of Happiness,
the time to set things right, is:

TODAY



PROLOGUE

What for?

TODAY – And the Pursuit of Moral Behaviour and Happiness

Life is a journey between birth and death, **to enjoy the journey is fundamental.** Eventually our achievements will be forgotten and the things we collect fade to nothing.

Societies need philosophies that support wanting to achieve things and wanting to be better. A philosophy of happiness, however, overarches all of these. Human moral behaviour is gregarious; everyone affects everyone else and the entirety of their surroundings.

While we all have individual goals and dreams, in whatever we do, we want to be happy. There must, however, be constraints on these goals as we all cannot do the same thing or things. Nor is it just for people to be trodden upon by others in their individual pursuits. Happiness, on the other hand, can be obtained in many ways; through love, thought achievement, and it is also the emotional reward felt when assisting others and supporting the world we live in.

The goals that we set ourselves and the goals that others pursue, have the potential to cause harm and to damage others. Acts towards these goals requires constraints in a form that we mostly call morals. The caveat that we put on human behaviour is simply that:

'Happiness should not be at the expense of others or world we live in.'

The human feeling we call empathy is the ability to sense the emotions of others. We see and feel joy and fulfilment when we see these emotions in others, particularly family, friends, or others whom we have supported or helped to achieve these emotions. Empathy, however, creates sadness when we see others in pain or simply denied the opportunity to be happy. We can also feel sadness when we are shown a world around us that is not flourishing. Remorse and guilt are part of the feelings we have if we instigate or are part of any such actions.

Empathy, remorse, and happiness are some of the raw emotions upon which morality is based. Life however is complex, and guidance is needed to apply moral judgment based on these emotions. What is **good**? What is **bad**? What is **sin**? What is **evil**? What are their opposites? Are they inter-related? Are these the same concepts in different guises? These are the questions considered within the philosophy of '**TODAY**'.

The aim of '**TODAY**' is to contribute to the pursuit of happiness through greater understanding of moral behaviour and the complex emotions upon which morality is based. It also provides a moral code to live by.

Simon Peter Knightley

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PART 1 – MORALITY

Morality is an innate human quality.

Morality

Morality is a commitment to oneself, others, nature, and the world around us of which the predominate aspects are:

- Taking care - moral behaviour directed at those around us and the world we live in.
- Goodness - the sum of a person's moral commitment and application.
- Virtue - the aggregate of the positive parts of our moral character.

Moral conduct is the application of moral principles through a commitment to a standard of behaviour which includes:

1. **Moral rules of conduct** are an articulated set of constraints or actions as needed to conform to essential moral behaviours. They guide us away from causing harm to others or the world around us. They provide a quick and easy reference of things 'to do' and 'not to do.'
2. **Altruistic acts** are doing things based on our concern for others and wanting to take action to help or support others or the world around us. Altruistic acts include, taking care of others, taking care of nature and the environment, and contributing to society.
3. **Virtuous qualities of character** can be divided in subsets of virtue and vice. Virtues are positive character traits while vice are the negative traits. The sum of virtues and vice is an insight as to character. Virtues and vice are listed below.

Virtues	Vices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fidelity • Temperance • Diligence • Patience • Kindness • Humanity • Honesty • Equanimity • Reverence • Self-respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lust • Gluttony • Greed • Sloth • Wrath • Envy • Pride • Bullying • Ignorance • Hatred

Table 1 - Virtue and Vice

We all have virtue and vice. The tendency to virtue and the denial of vice is the direction needed to be a moral and righteous person (A good person). For every person, their goal in life should be:

"A good person with admirable character traits who is at peace with him or herself and lives a happy existence."

The balance of virtue and vice within us does not remain static and continually shifts. It is a constant battle against temptation and fighting ever changing immoral influences. **Choosing a moral path requires an ongoing commitment to improve virtue and deny vice.**

Morality Vs Ethics. Morality is a taking care of others, goodness, and virtue. Ethics is adherence to a defined set of behavioural rules (rules of conduct) that may or *may not* contain moral principles. Moral beliefs can lead to moral ethics (i.e., moral codes of behaviour). Ethics, however, can exist outside moral contexts such as in hobbies and sport. Ethics also exist in immoral practices or beliefs. The two concepts are not interchangeable.

Precepts

‘The Precepts’ are the three principles actions for the attainment of moral standing. They are the intent of moral behaviour and provide the highest level of guidance. ‘The Three Precepts’ are:

- **Do no harm** - do not injure, damage, or hurt other living creatures or the world around us.
- **Do good** - enact beneficial, kind, or supportive acts.
- **Be good** - the human balance of virtue significantly outweighing vice.

‘The Precepts’ are further divided into the ‘The Particulars.’

Particulars

‘The Particulars’ align to the ‘Precepts;’ however, the grouping is not strict, and, in some contexts a particular may align to two or more ‘Precepts.’ ‘The Particulars’ consist of:

- Rules of conduct
- Altruistic acts, and
- Virtuous qualities of character.

‘The Particulars,’ of which there are twenty-five identified, are a means to apply ‘The Precepts,’ which are the higher guidance. They assist to find pathways to improvement. They are not complete but rather examples of the practical application of ‘The Precepts.’ The twenty-five ‘Particulars’ are listed below:

The Particulars	
1. do not kill	14. respect self and others
2. do not inflict pain	15. be humble
3. do not steal	16. be patient
4. do not lie	17. be content
5. be non-violent	18. be clean
6. obey just laws	19. seek a simple lifestyle
7. take care of others	20. seek self-improvement
8. treat all equally	21. do not engage in sexual misconduct
9. take care of nature	22. do not take mind altering substances
10. take care of the environment	23. do not waste
11. contribute to society	24. do not covet others or possessions
12. tell the truth	25. work hard
13. preserve just laws	

Table 2 - The Particulars

The Morality Model

The 'Morality Model' shows the interaction between morality, its 'Precepts' and 'Particulars'

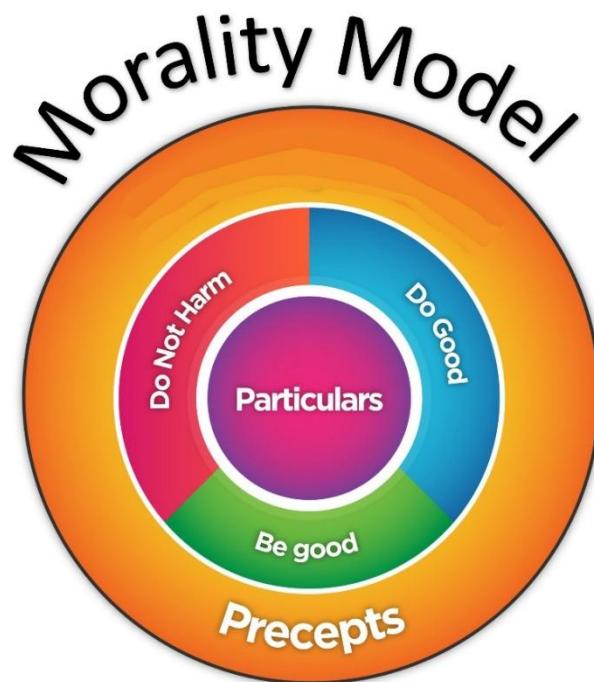


Figure 1 - The Morality Model

Morality	Precepts	Particulars
	DO NOT HARM	<p>Ethics – Rules of conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not kill Do not inflict pain Do not steal Do not lie Be non-violent Obey just laws
	DO GOOD	<p>Philanthropy – Altruistic acts for others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take care of others Treat all equally Take care of nature Take care of the environment Contribute to society Tell the truth Preserve just laws
	BE GOOD	<p>Virtues – Quality of character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect self and others Be humble Be patient Be content Be clean Seek a simple lifestyle Seek self improvement Do not engage in sexual misconduct Do not take mild altering substances Do not waste Do not covet others or possessions Work hard

Table 3 - The Morality Table

PART 2 – PERSPECTIVE

The elements of morality exist in complex interaction.

Morality in perspective

There are many elements to morality, seeking direction or finding a moral compass. Morality is enacted in our lives through:

- Intentions
- Persona
- Character
- Actions
- Outcomes
- Sin

Compass. A compass is a device that provides direction and a point of reference, a moral compass is a guide to for moral thinking and action. The philosophy ‘TODAY’ is a moral compass.

Intentions. Intentions are the purpose or attitude toward the effect of our actions or conduct. Our intentions are the, ‘Why’ behind our actions. Why are we doing this? What outcome are we looking to achieve? To morally understand your intentions, aligned them to ‘The Precepts.’

Persona. Persona is how we are perceived by others and reflects our inner self. Although at times we project a false persona, the true self eventually shows. In consideration of persona and morality, the two projections are good and or evil. Good or evil are descriptions of our moral behaviour along a single sliding scale of intentions.

A good or positive persona is achieved as our intentions focus on not causing harm, helping and support others and the world around us, and improving our virtues and rejecting vice. An evil persona is defined within the same construct but in the negative. The evil persona has intent to cause harm, hinder or hurt others and the environment and to embrace vice and to reject virtue.

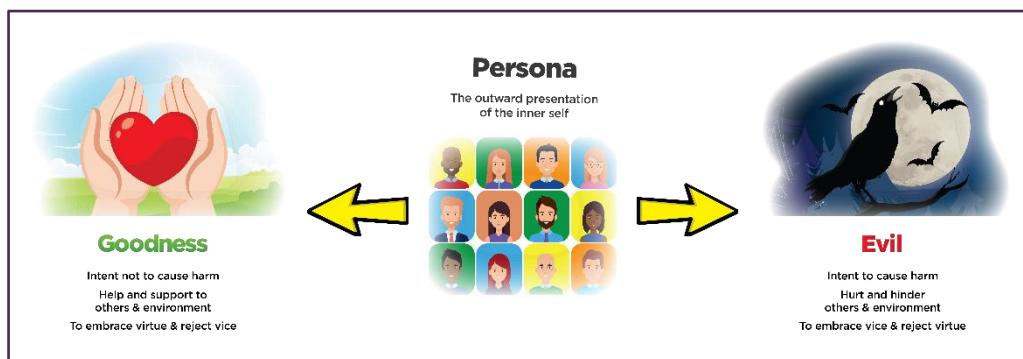


Figure 2 - Persona

Character. Character is the aggregate of features or traits that make us who we are. It is a conglomerate mass of both virtue and vice and the extent to which we apply virtue

and deny vice. We are never truly virtuous and without vice. While character is defined in terms of virtue and vice, it is measured by way of our actions and how they are judged. (i.e., good, or bad).

Character is the true balance of who we are, as opposed to persona which is the outwardly perceived aggregate of our vice and virtue by others.



Figure 3 - Character

Actions. Morality is applied through action. Our actions are something done, or something performed, either good or bad.

In the same manner that 'good and evil' are the same construct in viewing our persona, so too are 'good and bad' a single sliding scale of assessing the outcomes of our actions.

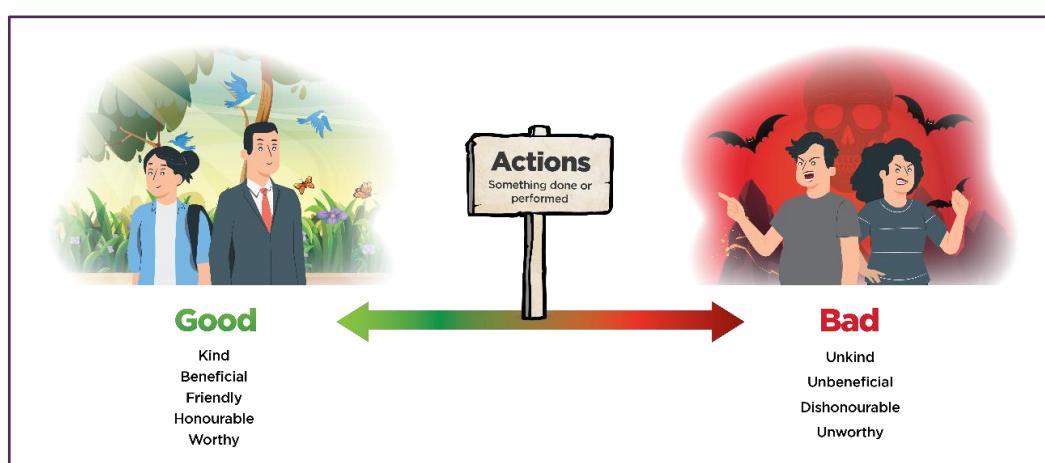


Figure 4 - Actions

Good actions are measured in kindness, benefit, friendliness, honour and worth. Bad actions are measured in the exact negative or opposite, i.e., unkindness, unbeneficial, dishonourable, and unworthy. The principal aid to assessment of moral actions is measurement of the outcomes.

Outcomes. Outcomes are the product, result, or consequence of our actions. The outcomes form the basis for judgement of whether the action was good or bad. These two concepts are again a single construct with two extremes, where 'wrong' is defined as the negative or opposite of the 'right.' 'Right' is in accordance with what is good, proper, or just and correct. 'Wrong' is not in accordance with what is good, proper, or unjust and incorrect.

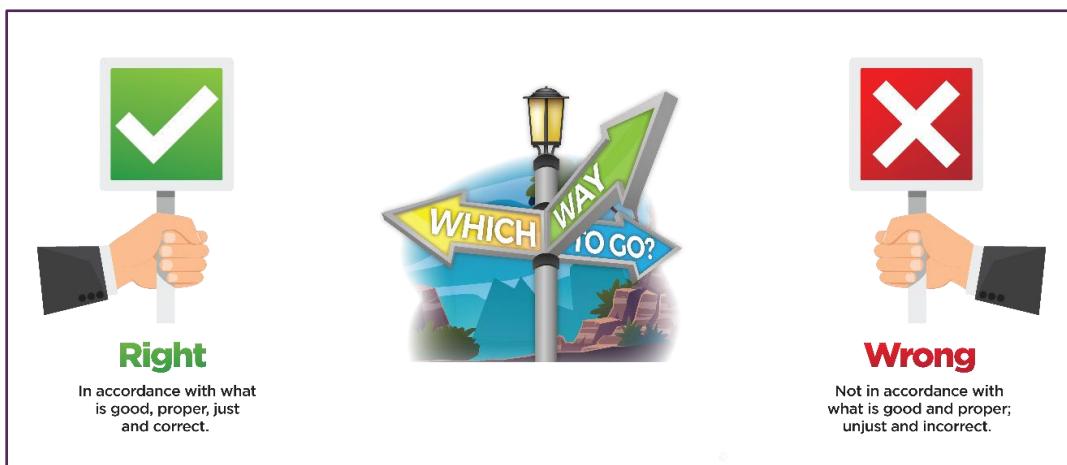


Figure 5 - Outcomes

Sin – is:

- A violation of moral principles.
- Reprehensible actions or behaviour.
- Being offense.
- Commission of vice.

Sin is applied to a set of moral principles. Where moral principles are broken a sin occurs. It is not applied to transgression of law or other codes of conduct e.g., sport and social clubs, particularly where those codes of conduct are not morally based or are morally irrelevant. These are known as crimes, offences, or breaches of conduct.

Perdition. Perdition is a living state of ruin based on guilt and remorse occasioned by the pursuit of evil or misfortune that leads to one's undoing.

The Relational Model

The Relational Model is the relationship between:

- Persona,
- Character,
- Actions and
- Outcomes.

It places them into perspective with one another and moral behaviour. Our persona reflects our character which is determined by the actions we perform and the outcomes we produce.

The Relational Model

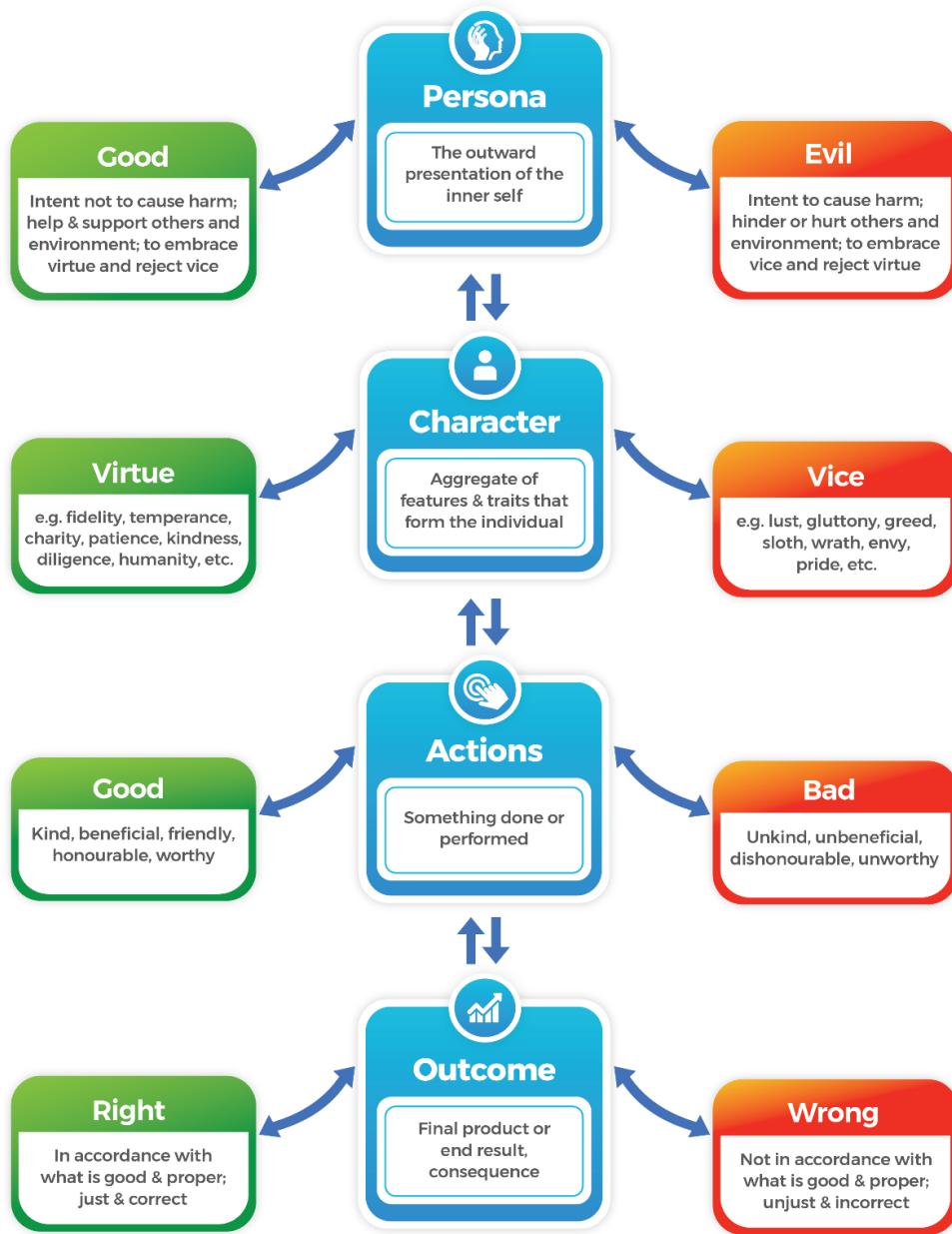


Figure 6 – The Relational Model

PART 3 – THE PRECEPTS

We are what we do.

Introduction

‘The Precepts’ are a basic and fundamental means to examine our moral standing. They provide the highest level of understanding and are the moral compass. ‘The Precepts’ are not divided into greater detail in the form of ‘The Particulars,’ but rather a comprehensive list of actions have been compiled into the ‘The Particulars’ and then aggregated with the most appropriate ‘Precept.’ The ‘Precepts’ and ‘Particulars’ can be applied both internally and externally to look at our behaviour and that of others.

The Three Precepts

‘The Three Precepts’:

- **Do no harm**
- **Do good**
- **Be good**



Figure 7 – The Precepts

First Precept – Do no harm

To not cause harm is a ‘Precept’ that stands alone and can be acted upon regardless of the other two ‘Precepts.’ For this reason, it is listed first.

For those who have never consciously considered their actions or the good or harm they do, the first ‘Precept’ is the first step in a measured approach to moral behaviour and moral improvement. Before embarking on good or reaching deep into your inner self to assess your virtue and vices, ask yourselves, what harm do I do? What harm am I doing? Once you become aware, you can take action to stop or minimise the harm you are doing. This is the most basic action to improve moral behaviour. Doing harm occurs through either direct actions or unintended consequences.

Direct action. This is where our actions directly cause harm. We can ask ourselves whether our actions physically abuse others, nature, or the world around us. Or do we use more subtle forms of abuse such as denigration or financial control to deny others from achieving a happy existence? These are but two examples of direct-action causing harm. The means and methods for causing direct harm are expansive and far too many to list. For those who cause harm, immediate action is called for. Seek help and assistance and accept the consequences as part of making amends.

For those causing what they might consider to be harm of only minor severity, the need to cease and desist is still applies. Self-control and commitment is what is needed. Be

empathetic by trying to imagine and feel the pain you inflict. This will help to control your actions.

Unintended consequences. This is the collateral harm caused by our actions to others, or the world around us. Great care and consideration is needed to assess the indirect consequences of our actions. The questions to be considered are cascading and expanding. If I do this, then what are the likely outcomes? What harm will those outcomes do? What subsequent events are they likely to cause? What harm will those subsequent events cause and so on? Doing harm can be minimised through predetermined action, and or considered action.

Predetermined actions. Predetermined actions are the application of principles or rules designed to minimise harm. They provide a code of behaviour that does not require significant thought or analysis to determine the right actions. (Although this is not always the case and when in doubt 'The Precepts' provide guidance.) Much of 'The Particulars' identified in Part 1 fit into predetermined actions. These include actions or rules such as obeying laws, preservation of life and respect for others.

While 'The Particulars' are not an absolute listing, they provide guidance that applies in an overwhelming number of instances. The occasions when these should be questioned are rare. Careful and considered analysis, however, should always be undertaken whenever any decision is made to act outside any of the predetermined actions. Consultation with friends, family or advisors must be conducted when there is any intent not to follow 'The Particulars.' There are never occasions not to follow 'The Precepts.'



Figure 8 – Do No Harm

Military conflict is a clear example where an individual must consider the morality of the actions they are being asked to undertake and assure themselves of the appropriateness of that action. Self Defence either at a national level or as an individual is an appropriate action. Predatory actions or bullying at either a national or individual level is not. Prescription medication prescribed by a medical doctor for mind-altering substances is another clear example where 'what appears to be a harmful action' is acceptable for the benefit of overall health.

Considered Actions. Considered actions are those where you need to apply thought and analysis to the consequences of your action as the outcomes are either not clear or the possibility for unintended consequences is high. Considered actions require a degree of mindfulness. Awareness is needed to see things for what they are with a clear conscious (being aware of one's own craving, aversion, or prejudices). Objective intention is achieved by overcoming subjective bias.

Making moral choices can be aided using modelling techniques – (see Annex A p42). A single action may trigger additional events (a domino effect). Where there are complex outcomes, alternative strategies need to be planned and be ready to employ. We need to apply continual reassessment of ‘intent,’ based on feedback and self-analysis. This assists in reaching a satisfactory result. Do not cling to previous decisions without justification, decision ownership is an easy trap to fall into. Actions must be modified or reversed when feedback indicates the need to do so. Continue to work towards the desired outcome and the prevention of harm.

Second Precept – Do good

‘Do good,’ is a ‘Precept’ that may stand alone or can build upon the first ‘Precept.’ It involves altruistic, kind, and generous acts directed at the welfare of others or the world around us.

To do good requires intent and active participation outside the normal conduct of our lives. It is a moral action undertaken with deliberate intent to do good which is a positive moral reflection on the doer. The second ‘Precept’ is enacted through deliberate actions of the body, speech, or mind. The second ‘Precept’ can be considered, helping others, making others happy and taking care.

Helping others. We can help others by giving time, money, possessions or any other resources or assets. We can do this through volunteer groups and associations, or we can act independently on our own. A careful and considered approach, however, is needed where there is potential of doing harm associated with acts of ‘doing good.’

Consideration of the world around us is included in ‘The Second Precept.’ Without a world to live in, there can be no existence. Undertakings for the world around us, inclusive of nature and the environment are acts of ‘doing good.’

There is always a need to be mindful of ‘The First Precept’ of doing harm where we might prevent others from growing, learning, and achieving their own independence. Additionally, no matter how poor or disadvantaged we might be, there are always opportunities to help others. The less we have, makes the act of giving so much greater. The more we have, makes the act of giving less significant.



Figure 9 – Helping Others

Where action is beyond us as an individual, we can find others to help by looking to friends and family, work colleges or looking to our local community. Looking further afield at the environment or larger issues, we can help by joining with associations or

groups. Ideally, we can spread our support across all layers of society and the world around us.

Make others happy. Taking the time to deliberately make others happy reflects upon the doer and brings reciprocal happiness to the doer as well as the receiver. We make others happy by helping them, and there is a wealth of ways to do this. These might be achieved by such simple acts as:

- smiling
- giving thanks
- showing love
- being truthful
- taking the time to listen
- being non judgemental
- acting fair, firm and friendly

Always act with intent and do not look for reward or self-gratification. There are opportunities all around us. Just go looking and they will be there.

Taking care. Taking care is looking after those close to us, and the world around us. It is just as much about taking care of our living space as it is the local area and the wider world. For governments and larger organisations, it is also about the oceans, the mountains, the forests, and our interaction with the universe.

Self-respect is central to taking care of ourselves and our families and we must continually apply this to ensure we find the time and motivation to complete the menial tasks of daily life. We must also combat the vices that take us away from our duties of taking care. By taking care of those around us, we make them happy and content. They are comforted by having someone upon whom they can rely. When we take care of the wider world, we make others happy through sustainment of a suitable world to live in. In doing so, we also make ourselves happy.

Third Precept – Be good

‘Be Good,’ is intra-perspective as it involves how we think and how we feel, unlike the first two ‘Precepts’ which are concerned with how we act. It is intricately interwoven with the first two ‘Precepts’ as it influences our actions. Others may judge us on this ‘Precept,’ but it is only us who truly know and understand how we think and why we do what we do. Achievement within ‘The Third Precept’ is not possible without some achievement within the first and second ‘Precepts.’

Achievement of ‘The Third Precept’ is never complete. Humanity abounds in mistakes and misjudgements. While live we need to apply a concerted effort to improve and or maintain our efforts to be good. We continue to make decisions and interact with the world around us, therefore, we need to be vigilant and continually examine what we do and why we do it. Behaviour reflects our character, and with determination and motivation, both (what and why) can be modified and controlled.

Virtues. The character traits and behaviours to follow and embraced are:

- **Fidelity** – refraining from sexual misconduct

- **Temperance** - moderation or self-restraint in action, statement, self-control
- **Diligence** - constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent exertion of body or mind; working hard
- **Patience** - bearing provocation, annoyance, misfortune, delay, hardship, and pain with fortitude and calm and without complaint, anger, or the like; quietly and steadily persevering
- **Kindness** - a good or benevolent nature or disposition; considerate, helpful; humane; gentle; clement; compassionate
- **Humanity** - tenderness, compassion, and sympathy for others, nature, and the environment, especially for the suffering or distressed; acting in a manner that causes the least harm
- **Honesty** - uprightness and fairness; truthfulness, sincerity, frankness
- **Equanimity** - emotional stability or composure under tension or strain; calmness; equilibrium
- **Reverence** - to honour and respect where appropriate; to act with dignity and integrity
- **Self-respect** - proper esteem or regard for the dignity of one's own character

Vice. Character traits and behaviours to be renounced and overcome:

- **Lust** - uncontrolled or illicit sexual desire or appetite; lecherousness; overmastering desire or craving, hunger, or yearning, to covet
- **Gluttony** - excessive eating and drinking
- **Greed** - avarice, excessive or rapacious desire for wealth, possessions, or gain
- **Sloth** - habitual disinclination to exertion; indolence; laziness
- **Wrath** - strong, stern, or fierce anger; deeply resentful indignation; ire; vengeance; rage, resentment, fury
- **Envy** - a feeling of discontent or covetousness regarding another's advantages, success, or possessions
- **Pride** - a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority
- **Bullying** - a desire to control and manipulate people or entities around us for our own self-interests; persecute, oppress, tyrannize, torment, browbeat, intimidate, cow, coerce, strong-arm, subjugate, domineer
- **Ignorance** - deliberately ignore or disregard valuable information or facts
- **Hatred** - intense dislike or extreme aversion or hostility

In the pursuit of being good, love and compassion is the key. We must associate with likeminded persons to foster and build a moral existence. We also need to be an example to others.



Figure 10 – Do Good Be Good

PART 4 –SELF

Understanding ourselves is confronting.

Comment - How to be happier?

Who am I?

How you see yourself and how others see you, is not the same. Inwardly, we see all our faults and limitations. Externally, our doubts, our motivations and our thoughts are hidden. That is not to say that either is more accurate, they are simply different. Morality is a significant part of who we are. It leads our actions and accomplishments which are in turn, seen and judged by others.

Finding our place in society is part of growing up and most people start to mature in their early teens. Moral teaching however is mostly learned or established early in life. Parents have a responsibility to instruct their children all the aspects of morality and to be examples. Teaching and practicing morality should never stop; however, a focus on early development will mould a developing child with the greatest effect.

Conflict always arise between who you want to be and who you are. This is where our expectations of self, do not meet with reality. Whether growing up or seeking self-improvement, perseverance and determination are needed, as well as some tolerance! Moral achievements provide the greatest rewards of self-esteem and happiness.

Success at work, sport and other worldly pursuits are admirable and to be commended; however, they are unlikely to bring deep and ongoing happiness unless they are pursued in a manner that accords with our conscience and moral code. Most people will never know enormous success. This, however, does not need to affect happiness or self-esteem where a moral code is followed. Being content with who we are is easy, if our goal is, 'just be a good person.'



Figure 11 – Who Am I

Self and sexuality particularly come to the fore with the commencement of the teenage years. Most find that their feelings of sexuality conform to those around them. Their path is the easier one. Some will struggle to know, understand or to accept that their sexuality may be different from family or friends. This is the difficult path for which embracing morality and its principles, always assists. It is also the recommended guidance for family and friends supporting those whose sexuality may be different from their own.

In a broader context, opportunity or more importantly, a lack of opportunity, should not be allowed to define who we are. Being taught wrong and being surrounded by vice and corruption can be overcome by embracing and learning morality. It just takes more effort and commitment, but in the longer term it leads to the greatest level of happiness. This is even more commendable when moral standing is achieved through adversity.

A moral code leads to a balanced and happy individual capable of weathering life's stormy seas.

Goals and Dreams

The goals that we set ourselves and the dreams we harbour are healthy aspects of human nature that push us to achieve what otherwise we may let go. We need to set ourselves realistic and achievable goals that we then take action to achieve. However small or large our goals may seem, they are important. Our goals push us towards our dreams.

We may or may not achieve our goals, but what is important is not to give in, but to continually reassess our situation, have new dreams and give ourselves new goals and direction. There may be sadness after achieving a significant goal as we risk of becoming lost and without cause. The answer is always to have new goals and dreams to pursue. Life is a journey not a destination.

Growing Old

We all grow old and die. This is the cycle of life. We do not know when our time will come. It might be years away or just around the corner. For those who are fortunate enough to grow old, they know that their time will come soon. For all of us, regardless of age, the time to set things right is TODAY.

Our perception of life and what is important to us changes as we grow older. As infants, we learn, and we grow. Then, as we mature, we construct our lives with work, family, friends, possessions, and achievements. Later, we begin to feel our mortality and see our place in the world as transient and prepare for our departure. Part of this process is continual reflection of the life we lead and how we judge ourselves. Some will try and make amends for past indiscretion while others will chase lost opportunities.

Embracing a moral code early in life gives greatest satisfaction. This becomes apparent whenever we reflect on our life and our contribution. A moral, modest, and simple life is just as worthy a goal, as those with significant drive, ability and opportunity that seek greatness.

We have essential possessions, however most of what we own is unnecessary and often is just a representation of our perceived success. We often see them as a form of fulfilment. Possessions, however, consume time and resources and the pleasure they bring is mostly limited and usually accompanied by increased responsibility and effort for maintenance. Possessions can own you just as much as you own them. We become their keepers and maintainers. A never-ending craving for possessions can be linked to lust, gluttony, and greed. Family and moral achievement brings far more pleasure and acceptance in our lives. Moderation is always the recommended path.

Happiness



Figure 12 - Happiness

Happiness is the singular greatest pursuit. The intricacies however of what makes a specific individual happy are as diverse as there are people. It is, however, inextricably linked to, and influenced by moral behaviour. Happiness is difficult to measure, but it can be thought of as having four components:

- Fulfilment. Fulfilment is both an emotional and psychological state of mind where one reaches a level of satisfaction with life. The meaning of life is internally reconciled, regardless of belief systems or otherwise and the direction and accomplishment of life meets expectation.
- Enjoyment. Enjoyment is also an emotional and psychological state of mind where pleasure and glee are derived from living and engaging in the events and happenings around us.
- Resilience. Resilience, with regards to happiness, is our ability to resist psychologically and physically from being overwhelmed by adversity, misfortune and or evil.
- Wellbeing. Wellbeing is our physical and mental health which is core to happiness.

Happiness is a personal and subjective assessment of how one's emotions are responding to the components of happiness. The emotional response may or may not be balanced or rational; however, it is the sum of the emotional state that dominates the psyche.

Our levels of happiness are never at a steady state, as elements within the components constantly change. Therefore, we experience periods of greater happiness and periods of unhappiness. This is normal. A negative state of mind is unpleasant and inspires us to deal with aspects of life that are the cause of unhappiness.

Unhappiness. Unhappiness is an emotional state where the scarcity or limited achievement of the components of happiness, are such that, the overarching emotional state is negative. Short periods of time in this emotional state are to be expected and are normal. Dealing with tragedy and disappointment is part of life; however, prolonged unhappiness points to misalignment of perspective or poor health. For all tragedy, there is a time for mourning and a time to move on.

Major indicators of unhappiness are suffering, anxiety, lack of satisfaction, being ill at ease and lack of self-esteem. Causes of unhappiness, listed against the most appropriate component of happiness are provided in the table below:

Happiness Component	Common contributors to unhappiness <i>(note: Some factors work across multiple components of happiness)</i>
Fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family breakdown • Obsession – alcohol, drugs, work, gambling • Sin, crime • Resistance to change • Debt • Pursuit of vice • Perfectionism • Ignorance
Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family breakdown • Obsession – alcohol, drugs, work, gambling • Anxiety • Poor physical or mental health • Low self-esteem • Resistance to change • Laziness
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence by others • Pursuit of vice • Poor physical or mental health • Low self-esteem • Misfortune • Ignorance
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness or injury • Poor or inappropriate lifestyle • Pursuit of vice • Old age

Table 4 - Components of Happiness

An understanding of the components of happiness is an insight to dealing with unexpected or prolonged unhappiness.

The pursuit of happiness. Some individuals find happiness and maintain that state of mind even after the ravages or tragedies of life contribute to periods of depression. Others must work at being happy or have suffered so much that they need assistance to refocus their perspective. As the pursuit of happiness is aligned with the pursuit of a moral existence, the two are complementary and in some instances the same.



Figure 13 – *The Pursuit of Happiness*

Happiness is a subjective and subconscious personal assessment that is internalised. Addressing unhappiness is achieved through two distinct processes. The first is alignment of the internalised personal assessment to be happy and content with the status quo. (Be content with who you are and what you have) The second is a conscience review of components of happiness to determine the factors that are lacking and causing unhappiness. The aim being to address these and work to realign the conscience self and make the changes to achieve happiness. (Change what needs to be changed)

Fulfilment. Fulfilment is best understood by defining what makes us satisfied. This is different for everyone. It might be family, work, friends, hobbies, sport, or art. For others, religion and faith plays a significant part. Answering the question of life or what lies beyond death are thoughts that should only be undertaken by those who are already comfortable with their living existence. What is most important is seeking fulfilment from what is achievable. (Do not have unachievable goals!)



Figure 14 – *Fulfilment*

If the pursuit of a goal becomes unattainable then acceptance and realignment to new, achievable fulfilment is needed. Denial of vice and actively engaging in virtue aids in fulfilment. Wisdom is needed to overcome ignorance and prejudice (which counter happiness). For most, a moderate approach is the best where extremism, fanaticism and other obsessive behaviours and thoughts are best avoided (including obsessive attitudes to work, wealth, or power).

Enjoyment. Everyone needs to take the time to enjoy life and to reflect on everything around them that is good. This contributor to happiness and is often lacking in those who are unhappy (Not taking the time to smell the roses). Some worry and anxiety is

healthy and assists to make good decisions. Obsessive levels of worry and anxiety do not contribute to outcomes and stymie achievement as they create negative thoughts, contribute to low self-esteem, and deny the opportunity for enjoyment.

Resilience. At times you will be surrounded by negative thoughts and tragic news. There will also be times when you are tempted and or offered corruption. Life has its tragedies and failures. Resilience is what gets us through. Strength of character is needed. Believe in what is right and the wisdom of your life's experience and learning. When weak or waning, seek strength and support from family, friends, and others who you know are strong and are there to support you.



Figure 15 – Resilience

Wellbeing. A healthy body leads to a healthy mind. Take care of yourself and do not ignore issues that need to be addressed by health professionals. Adopt a healthy lifestyle. Do not allow other priorities to dominate. What is the point of fulfilment if you have no health? All the components of happiness need to be addressed and afforded equal priority and importance.

Meditation is a practice used to aid suffering, and it also supports fulfilment and happiness. It is prevalent in Eastern culture and has potential to assist with wellbeing. Examine alternate resources and assess their potential to improve your wellbeing.

Extreme failure or sin. An everlasting state of unachieved fulfilment can exist when you fail to meet your own expectations. This can be through indulgence of vice, drugs or committing sin or crime. It might also be an inability to provide for family or failure at business. Failure to make amends and to reconcile (the act or omission) will leave you in perpetual unhappiness. Wisdom, morality, and mental training are the path from perdition. ‘The Precepts’ are the starting point and the direction for self-forgiveness. Repaying a debt to society may also be needed. Reflect on what you can offer life as much as what it can offer you. If unhappiness prevails then you need to seek help and support.

Further reading. Mortality and happiness are strongly linked. Further research and reading is recommended for those looking for greater insight.



Figure 16 – Meditation

PART 5 – THE WORLD AROUND US

Good and bad is everywhere.

Comment

Wisdom is for the wise.

Work and Subsistence

What we do in life, defines us. Mostly, the outcomes of our life are related to the work we do. It provides for us and our families. This includes the most basic levels of work for self-subsistence, unemployment, farmer, business mogul, a President, or the wealthy. The work or actions of our efforts are the vehicle which gives us the means to develop our possessions and the virtues of our character. Alternatively, work and wealth provides opportunity for vice, corruption, and sin. It is also how we assess and measure others.

In context, do not measure yourself by the achievements or imposed assessment of others, but by the goals and dreams that we create for ourselves. We risk either setting our goals too high and failing to achieve them; or we deny our talents that are never realised.

Work and responsibilities are integral to a family unit. All family members can contribute to agreed goals and grow together. It is one of the means of how we contribute to the greater good of all. Regardless of position or standing, when working we should take the time to reward others and provide positive feedback for moral actions. We also should apply virtues and act on ‘The Precepts.’

Family and Friends

The importance of Family and friends cannot be overstated. They form a sizeable portion of the fulfilment of life. People are gregarious and need social interaction.



Figure 17 – Family and Friends

Take care of family and friends but do not ignore immoral behaviour. Do not be corrupted or lead astray from the pursuit of a moral life (either within or outside the family unit). Disassociate from and deny immoral behaviour but be prepared to forgive

and assist family or friends who prove themselves worthy by renouncing immoral ways and conduct due penance.

Commerce

Buying and selling, be these goods or services, has opportunity for fulfilment and enjoyment but also carries tremendous opportunities for temptation, greed, and corruption. The conduct of commerce requires the highest levels of diligence and consideration to avoid personal degradation. Successful commerce can also lead to opportunities within the second 'Precept' at a scale that would not be achievable otherwise.

The nature of commercial entities needs to be understood. Commercial entities are not living. They do not have feelings. They do not have a conscience. They do not care for the world around them. They exist only for the creation of wealth. They cannot act morally or immorally because they cannot judge what they do within any moral framework. To control commercial entities and prevent them from running amok, governments use a legal framework which is applied and enforced by financial penalties.

Commercial entities are owned and controlled by people and people do have a conscience and an internal moral framework. The morality of those in control of commercial entities is paramount. Persons in these positions can easily become corrupt and lose their moral compass because of the significant wealth and power that can be generated by large commerce. They can take on the persona of the commercial entity and focus on wealth at the cost of humanity and compassion. Persons of moral standing are needed at all levels of commerce to balance and prevent the corruption of those who take on the persona of a commercial entity and live without morality.



Figure 18 – Commerce

For individuals engaged in small to medium levels of commerce, the most important consideration is conducting business in a proper and moral manner and not engaging in activity solely for the pursuit of wealth. Take care of those who work for you. Deal fairly and honestly. Avoid practices or dealings that are immoral, illegal, or even questionable.

Society, government, and individuals must take great care to maintain control of commercial entities and not allow them to take control of society and government.

Commerce has a never-ending goal of continued wealth creation. They are entities that are by their own nature, insatiable.

Commerce always seeks for us to want more, whereas the moral path and the road to happiness encourages us to be content with less.

Government

Government is a controlling body created by society or groups for the establishment of a framework to grow and prosper. Government is like commerce in that it does not have a moral conscience and is not living; however, its purpose and role is multifaceted and can be changed as needed. Methods of control are diverse and varied.

The role of government should be a comprehensive approach to provide for society regarding:

- Safety and protection
- Prosperity
- Preservation of rights and freedom
- Protection of the environment

Typically, governing bodies create our:

- Laws and policing
- Currency
- Defence
- Taxation
- Social support
- Infrastructure

Governments should be directed and constrained by written governance, such as a constitution, which is fair, honest and includes consideration not only of the populous but also the environment and plans for future needs. It should be considered and agreed by a majority. Minority interests: however, must be protected as they lose influence in democratic processes. Controls must be created that limit the influence of corruption and prevent a narrow focus on contemporary and local issues only.



Figure 19 – Governments

Governments can lose their way and become self-fulfilling with a focus on self (or the individuals within the governing body). Freedom of expression and freedom of speech is, and always will be, the antithesis of corrupt or misguided government. Freedom of speech must be protected to reveal and remove those who become corrupt or

misguided. The environment and the creatures around us do not have a voice. They are part of our greater home, and we cannot exist without them. Their preservation and protection is as equally important as those who share their home.

Engagement in government by those with moral fortitude is essential to prevent control by immoral forces (within and without) wishing to promote self-interest. Care must be exercised in monitoring commerce, as government is the body that produces the constraining laws that keep commerce within moral bounds. The logical extension for commerce is to control government and therefore remove the shackles that impose restrictions on how they achieve their aim of evermore wealth creation.

Politics

Politics is a human interplay that exists at all levels of society from family to corporation to government. It comes to the fore with the appropriation of power and/or decision-making responsibilities. Power is pursued or used for interests or outcomes. Persons of like interests are often aggregated into factional alliances and politics is how group decisions are made or influenced.

While politics has been the study of philosophers since ancient times, it is essentially neither good nor bad. It is part of the group or society decision-making process. The process, like all things, however, can be corrupted. Persons of moral standing are therefore needed within the political process to ensure fair play and to deny infiltration of government and the influence of government decision-making. Commerce and or self-interested parties such as organised crime have much to gain by taking control of decision-making processes. As with government, freedom of expression and speech are also paramount to circumventing corruption in higher levels of politics.



Figure 20 – Politics

Involvement in formal or government politics is not advisable for groups or organisations concerned with moral behaviour lest they lose their way in the pursuit of political aims. Politics is best left for the individuals of moral standing while organisations of morality are best left to focus on teaching and understanding morality.

Political involvement is important to create and maintain a good society where there is balance in power; and justice and order prevail.

Religion

Context. Religion has been the champion of moral behaviour for human society for hundreds of years but is declining in modern societies. All forms of religion contain frameworks for moral behaviour; however, they are contained within belief systems which may or may not have a moral context. This does not detract from the value of the moral teachings; however, where a person departs from a religion or religious belief, their moral teachings are left without context.

Religious good. Religion is part of a greater social conscience and provides significant social support infrastructure. A decline in religion poses a risk of decline in social support and moral following as these have been championed by religious groups. Creating philanthropic organisations that are secular, but open to all, is a way to involve religious and non-religious persons in a goal of common good. This in turn mitigates the risk of decline in social good and moral teaching.



Figure 21 – Hands in Prayer

Exclusivity. Religious belief systems are exclusive whereby an individual is taught to only relate to one religion and precluded from following a competing theology. Religious institutions, like all human constructs, can at times suffer from corruption and distortion through human failing. Alternatively, those parts of modern society that embrace secularism see justice and order as innate components of humanity and often see religion as irrelevant. The result of exclusivity and secularism is competing beliefs that can be in conflict.

Conflict. The evil in humankind can take root in both religious and non-religious (secular) societies. It often manifests itself as fanaticism and or ignorance. It occurs in politics, religion, and international relations. It takes root in radical fractions of church, temples, governments, corporations, and political parties. Equanimity, patience, and diligence can combat such evil. The common goal is to achieve a safe and prosperous existence for all (but within the bounds of a moral code).

Health and Recreation

Health and recreation is core to wellbeing. It is a central theme of happiness. Health and recreation can be considered from the perspectives of physical and mental wellbeing, both of which are linked and co-dependent. Effort must be undertaken to

take care of both components to achieve balance. A four-quadrant approach to health and recreation is provided in the table below. The elements shown are some of the more common considerations. The lists is indicative and not to be considered all inclusive.

Item	Mental	Physical
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Study • Science • Hobbies (intellectual) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diet • Exercise • Mobility • Dexterity
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Music • Reading • Study • Hobbies (intellectual) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport • Adventure • Hobbies (Physical)

Table 5 - The Health and Recreation Table

A well-rounded approach to health and recreation takes into consideration aspects within each of the four quadrants. The desired approach is for us to be active in each of the four quadrants. For example, a highly physical occupation is balanced by recreation in less physical pursuits and the other way around. Vice, gluttony, greed, and sloth diminish our health and recreation. As we age, our health and recreational ability diminish. Illness and or injury reduce our health and ability to undertake recreation. Therefore, we are all advised to take an active approach to taking care of our health and preventing illness. When these do occur; however, we must also manage ourselves as best and as diligently as possible.

The Environment

The environment is everything that makes up our surroundings and affects our ability to live on the earth; the air we breathe, the land and water that covers the earth's surface, the plants and animals, the universe, everything (including us). The environment is ever changing as there are ongoing interactions between plants, animals, soil, water, temperature, light, and other living and non-living things.

Corporate greed, political lust, and human overpopulation are the most significant threats to the environment. They tend to work for their own self-interest or needs. They must be countered with equanimity and never-ending diligence to guide human civilization to a point of harmony with the environment. We share the environment with the plants and animals. Without an environment we cannot exist, and they cannot exist. It is the only home we have.

Inequality

Everyone deserves to be equal even though everyone is born different regarding size, shape, colour, sex, ability and so on. In this sense, we are not the same or equal. Philosophically and morally, however, we are equal in our rights for justice, freedom, and opportunity. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in the real world. The status of women in society is an example of physical inequality that is sometimes applied by

the male gender. It is discussed below as an example of inequality which is driven by the vice of pride, ignorance, and bullying.



Figure 22 – Racial Inequality

The physical and mental differences between the sexes has survived and flourished over thousands of years. This diversity of ability and aptitude can be a constructive collaboration where men and women united can achieve more together than they could individually. Where inequality and subjugation exists, this partnership does not achieve as much as it could.

Inequality can arise because the male is stronger and can impose his will, regardless of rational and fair thinking. This leads to domination and subservience of women, and in some cases, this becomes the accepted social norm. To deny women equal opportunity is to deny society the opportunity to be all it can be.

The path to gender equality lies within ‘The Precepts’ and applying the virtues of diligence and equanimity and accepting that the subjugation of women is a sin of pride, ignorance, and bullying.



Figure 23 – Gender Inequality

There are many other forms of inequality, not just gender, which require our attention. These include race and religious. An analysis of these is not included as gender inequality is sufficient example of the moral lesson.

Sexuality

Sexual orientation has wide variation and for most of us, we are born with a sexual preference that does not change. On occasion however, some individuals find their sexual orientation is at odds with their inward orientation and they may need to make changes to be at peace with who they are. Most sexual orientation is male female but there also exists preference for the same sex, desires to change sex and individuals born with ambiguous sexuality and still more variations on these.

Biologically, the male-female sexual orientation is the one which most supports the creation of new life. Unfortunately, this mainstream sexual orientation is often labelled 'normal' and is sometimes forced on others regardless of their inherited or accepted behavioural traits. Sexual orientation is not morally important. Consideration of 'The Precepts,' rules of conduct, personal character and helping others is what is important.

Much of the prejudice that exists between groups of differing sexual orientation is based on a fear of the unknown. Consideration of the moral issues of sexuality requires overcoming of personal fears to have rational thoughts.

Our own sexuality is imbued with such emotion and primal behaviour that we require considerable effort to overcome our bias. Where clear and unbiased thought is brought to bear, sexual orientations can be seen as benign.

Sexual Predation

Sexual predation must be separated from sexual orientation. Sexual predators are an evil entity. They cause extreme harm to others. They exist across all forms of sexual orientation and pose a great threat to all, but particularly those who are physically weaker such as women and children.

Children are open to inappropriate influence at an early age. Sex and sexuality is not a topic for children. Children need to be given the opportunity to develop their own sexuality without influence or prejudice and given the time to mature so they can make informed decisions for themselves.

PART 6 – FORGIVENESS

To be human is to be imperfect.

Comment

Seeking forgiveness.

What Goes Wrong?

Humans by nature are imperfect. We make mistakes and do wrong. We suffer the consequences. When this occurs, we need to seek forgiveness and give forgiveness to others.

The transgressions we make are derived from:

- Sin
- Failure
- Mistakes

Forgiveness can be difficult to give or seek. At times we sin, fail, and make mistakes. Additionally, we make decisions and cause outcomes that have both positive and negative outcomes. These make it unavoidable at times to cause some harm. Regardless of how harm is caused, we need to seek forgiveness.



Figure 24 – Forgiveness

Giving or seeking forgiveness is difficult and the nature of an indiscretion affects the level of difficulty. Our character and the influence of vice such as pride, wrath, ignorance, and hatred make it even harder.

Sin. Sin is when we act outside of our rules of conduct (our accepted morals) and or we engage in vice. It is best understood by examination of 'The First Precept.'

Failure. Failure is when we cannot achieve our intentions (for ourselves or others). This might be as significant as being unable to provide for our family or being unable to complete some tasks resulting in harm being caused.

Mistakes. Mistakes occur for a myriad of reasons and include misinformation, poor judgement, inattention, or lack of due care.

Sin, failure, or mistakes may be trivial, or they may be significant. How we deal with forgiveness has a great deal to do with this significance and frequency.

Seeking Forgiveness

Seeking forgiveness is a virtue because it demonstrates that we have accepted that we have caused harm and are seeking remediation. Significant sin, failure, or mistake require equally significant effort and actions to achieve forgiveness. Small matters may quickly and easily be forgiven, but seeking forgiveness is still important.

The components of seeking forgiveness are:

- Acceptance
- Empathy (and Remorse)
- Remediation
- Communication

While all the components of forgiveness are necessary to achieve forgiveness, they do not occur in any logical sequence, and they also overlap.

Acceptance. The first part of seeking forgiveness is acceptance that harm (whether intentional or not) has been caused and communicating this to the prospective forgiver.

Empathy. Empathy is achieved by placing oneself in the position of the other person and appreciating their pain or loss. Empathetic feelings need to be communicated to the giver of forgiveness to help with the forgiveness process. How this occurs is difficult to quantify but in the most simplistic of instances it might take the form of a sincere apology.

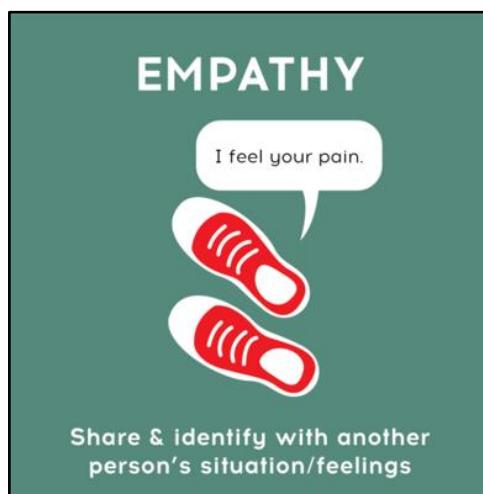


Figure 25 – Empathy

Note: Some persons (sociopaths/psychopaths/narcissists) are incapable of empathy and only seek forgiveness when it is for their own gain or need.

Remediation. Remediation or rectification of the harm or damage done follows acceptance. The first and simplest form of remediation is to undo the harm caused. This can be achieved by replacement or returning what was lost or harmed. We effectively undo what was done. Where this is not possible the alternative is to do good. In this instance we compensate for the harm done. In a legal framework, this is always financially based; but in human relations, compensation may be given in many forms such as repairing or replacing the harm done or providing something else of equitable value.

Undoing what was done or providing equal compensation may be insufficient remediation for forgiveness. This is based on the pain and suffering, or lost opportunities incurred in addition to the direct harm. This is reasonable and often needed for the giver/seeker to move on. Sometimes however, a mediator may be needed to balance the emotive issues and to reach a levelled and achievable outcome. A mediator can be used:

- to provide objective assessment of the harm caused
- to provide objective assessment of remediation

Communication. Communication between the seeker/giver of forgiveness is needed to facilitate the passing of awareness of the full nature of the loss/harm and that acceptance and empathy has occurred. Remediation is also facilitated by communications as all involved need to work together to achieve either undoing or compensating the harm, as necessary.

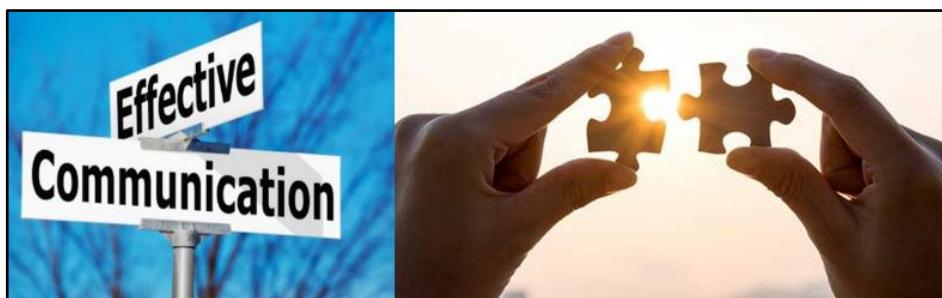


Figure 26 – Communications

Communications is the most difficult step in forgiveness with either the seeker or giver unable to face the other and consider what has occurred. Mediators and representatives can assist. They can manage and facilitate communications with a view to reciprocal acceptance and empathy between the giver/seeker.

Giving Forgiveness

Forgiving is a virtue. It may be sought, or it may be given with or without consent or request.

We forgive because forgiveness:

- allows us to move on from loss or harm received
- is a charitable gift to the receiver
- may facilitate undoing or compensation of harm

Moving on. Giving forgiveness is not so much a process but rather part of grieving, while seeking forgiveness is very much a process. The natural responses to being harmed are both emotional and physical. The harm inflicted causes us pain and distress and incites a desire to retaliate. While there is a need for self-defence (to prevent further harm), little if anything is ever achieved from retaliation.

Emotional bitterness and hate stymie growth and divert effort towards illegitimate pursuits of no value. Hate is a vice to be conquered and overcome. It biases decisions and clouds thoughts. Our actions need to be measured and moral. Forgiving helps to overcome hate and bitterness. Whether sought or not, after a time of grieving, there

comes a time to forgive. Focus can then return to the present and planning for the future. Remaining in the past serves no purpose.

Charitable gift. When given, forgiveness is a gift and is the choice of the giver.

Remediation. Being prepared to forgive opens the pathway for communications and facilitation of efforts to undo or compensate for the harm or loss caused. While evil exists in the world, most of the harm or loss inflicted upon us will be by mistake, failure or from moral persons who have sinned and strayed from their moral path.

Judgement

Human nature is diverse with everyone having different sets of values, bias, and influence. People place different value on loss or harm caused and therefore on what is appropriate remediation. Judgement is part of forgiveness as it supports both the seeker and the giver. A harm-doer may be unaware of the harm they have inflicted, or they may see remediation as excessive. A giver of forgiveness must judge whether empathy is sincere and whether forgiveness is deserved.

The best that can be achieved is a reasonable judgement confirmed by wisdom and communications with others. Communication, consultation, and advice are what are needed to ensure judgements are balanced and reasonable.

Perdition

The first step for a return from ruin, is acceptance of guilt and remorse, as part of seeking forgiveness. Where self-forgiveness is required, then seeking advice (counselling) from others is important because judgement of ourselves can be prejudiced by self-bias (too forgiving or not forgiving at all). Effectively, we need a mediator for our own thought processes.



Figure 27 – Perdition

PART 7 - REFLECTION

Ultimately a decision is needed.

Comment

Self-examination and what is needed to be a better person.

Self-examination

If life's journey is one of continuous self-improvement, then self-examination never ends. What are our inner thoughts? Do we have an intention to harm? Is there an intention for kind or unkind actions towards others? Is our concern only for self-well-being or attainment of our desires?

Some desires to cause harm and focus on self-interest is normal, but only to a degree. When these intentions are at the exclusion of all others, then we have become an evil persona. For most of us, these are thoughts and emotions that can occur every day and need to be resisted and replaced with positive thoughts and actions. If we, 'give in' to such thoughts, we cause harm and in addition suffer remorse and guilt. Our persona slides to the right in the measure of good vs evil.

These are the questions for consideration:

1. Do you want to be a good person?
2. Do you want to be a better person?
3. Do you want to achieve more of the right outcomes and less of the wrong ones?
4. Do you want to live according to a set of moral standards?

This is your self-examination.

Commitment

For most of us, commitment to a moral set of behavioural standards is a state of mind that already exists within our consciousness. It may not, however, be formally structured in our thoughts. Others must consciously renew their commitment. Commitment to a moral set of behaviour can be internalised in our inner thoughts by applying: 'The Three Precepts.' They can be used as a simple and appropriate strategy to analyse our intentions and behaviours. Alternatively, a commitment can be announced publicly, thereby opening us to scrutiny by those around us.



Figure 28 – Commitment

Making a Pledge

A formal and public pledge is a means to achieving a personal commitment to an appropriate set of behavioural standards. While this is not necessary, it does provide commitment that forms part of our honour and integrity among those around us. The public nature of such a commitment allows us to draw on the support and expectations of others. Below is an example of a pledge based on the three 'Precepts' that can be used to commit to a set of behavioural standards.

*I <name>..... do solemnly and faithfully
pledge that I will strive to:*

- ❖ *Do no harm*
- ❖ *Do good*
- ❖ *Be good*

*Declared at <location> , <state> , <country>
on this <date> day of <month> <year> and
witnessed by <name> of <province> , <state>
, <country>*

Figure 29 – Example Pledge

A Decision Model

In addition to having intent and commitment to a moral standard of behaviour, improving the quality of moral decision making is important. There is always the potential for the best intentions to go awry and cause more harm than good. Consideration of 'The First Precept' often involves consideration of the consequences of our actions and the harm they may cause.

Most of us think in a linear manner. If I do action 'A' then outcome 'B' will result. Life's experiences, however, tells us that this is not always the case. There is value therefore in expanding our consideration of alternate outcomes for our actions. By doing this, we can either prepare for these alternate outcomes or put measures in place to try and prevent an unwanted result. For example, I am doing action 'A' for outcome 'B' however I must plan and consider that action 'A' may cause outcome 'C' or 'D' or 'E.'

The Decision Helper (DH) is a moral risk analysis tool for improving the outcomes of moral actions and decisions through consideration of unintended consequences. The 'DH' comprises three steps. The objective of the first step is to consider two other outcomes from the intended one. These are possibilities where the outcome is different from what is expected. The second step then expands each of the three possible outcomes to consider three possible consequences these outcomes may have. The result is nine possible consequences from three outcomes to be considered. The last step is to review the results and decide whether:

- Do not act – the risks are too high
- Mitigate – against unintended outcomes and consequences
- Accept the risk of unintended outcomes and continue with the course of action or decision

More detail of the Decision Helper, decision model is provided at Annex A.

Absolutes

There are no absolutes. There are no ethics or codes of behaviour that apply to every situation. There is no person with perfect virtue and without vice. There is no person without some goodness who is evil. There is no action that does not cause some harm. There are no absolutes, but there are 'The Three Precepts,' and they are the guide.

In PART 1 – MORALITY there is a list of ethics. The most basic of these is, 'Do not kill.' This is a strict social code that is followed with dire consequences for breaches. Yet in an unjustified attack, a man may raise his hand and take necessary action to defend himself or his family. This right (and need) is widely accepted across society even though it might cross the, 'Do not kill' line. Such an action seeks to cause deliberate harm to the attacker. This is a clear example where a balance must be struck between those who act to cause harm and the actions of those who defend against harm and act in accordance with law.



Figure 30 – No Absolutes

Morality is a balanced judgement of competing considerations. Can an attacking person be subdued without lethal force? If so, then this is the way for self-defence to be applied. If not, then appropriate force must be used. The internal reflection is to ask ourselves; ‘What harm am I causing?’ ‘How can this be prevented?’ ‘Can this harm be minimised?’ ‘Can this harm ever be accepted?’ ‘Is the harm I am causing in context of the good I am doing?’ With the overarching aim of not causing harm, we can answer these questions.

In complex moral situations, an external perspective is more accurate and brings new light to issues. Whenever possible, seek advice and evaluation of proposed actions from valued friends and advisors. For noteworthy events also seek advice and assistance to determine and evaluate outcomes and their consequences.

Decision-making.

Human failings need to be overcome and excluded as much as possible from moral decision-making. Some unintended wrong decisions, however, can and will be made, this is unavoidable. In some cases, not making any decision can be worse than making the wrong decision. Do not fear to make mistakes. Be fearful of pride and decision ownership. Do not rationalise against indicators that show a need for change. We cannot find the right path if we do not recognise, we are on the wrong path.

How do we divorce ourselves from our decisions? As soon as a path or decision has been made, look for and identify indicators that you expect to see, that show your decisions are achieving the desired outcomes and intent. Also, identify indicators that you expect to see if the path is the wrong one. Periodically, review and consult external sources for their thoughts. While one or two diverging opinions may not mean much, a cluster of divergent thought needs to be objectively investigated. There is a need to change your direction or revoke decisions that are having the opposite effect to your intended one.

On occasions, we delude ourselves that our decisions are achieving the desired outcomes. This is self-justification and is the practice of making false sense from mistakes and bad decisions. While it keeps our self-esteem in balance, we unknowingly lie to ourselves. (This can be thought of as a psychological blind spot where emotions can trump logic). Be mindful that change is always possible.

Improvement Model

The ‘Morality Model’ and ‘The Relational Model’ provide a simple but clear understanding and perspective of morality. From these models, an approach to achieving a higher level of morality can be undertaken. Some moral issues are simple, others however, have extreme complexity where any or all decisions cause harm or result in wrong outcomes. Dealing with complex issues is always difficult. Whatever model or strategy for improvement is used, the model itself should be simple and easily applied.

Any effort to improve morality needs to be based on increased ethical behaviour, engaging in kind and friendly acts, and embracing virtues and denying vice. This aim is depicted in ‘The Moral Improvement Model,’ below.



Figure 31 – The Moral Improvement Model



Figure 32 – The Road to Happiness

This model is a simple approach that belies the difficulties in discovering the ‘how’ and achieving the motivation to succeed. These challenges however are addressed in the steps to improved moral behaviour.

PART 8 - IMPROVEMENT

Do something, it may be nothing, but it may not.

Comment

‘The Moral Compass’ and recognising moral improvement as an ongoing process.

Practical Application

If you seek moral improvement, then a study of the lessons and wisdom of those who have gone before you is worthwhile; bearing in mind that moral improvement is not a destination but a continuous journey. Overarching principles are easily contrived; however, the difficulty is in the detail and in applying this to your personal situations (and the effect of external influences).

Moral improvement is based on goodwill and compassion directed towards the objects of our morality which may be:

- one’s parents,
- spouse and family
- friends
- all other beings
- the world around us

Our moral improvement requires a conscious decision to act based on where you are (morally) and where you want to be. The following steps to improved morality are provided as a guide or suggested path for you to seek improved moral being. The steps are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1 • Step 2 • Step 3 • Step 4 • Step 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize morality - Make a self-assessment - Determine an end-state - Commit - Act
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The steps are presented in a linear progression; however, they need not be followed in any order and are really a continuous process of recognizing, assessing, and acting.



Figure 33 – Action

Step 1 – Recognise Morality

Morality in most of its guises is easily recognised; however, some review and discussion assists with informed decisions of how to improve your morality. A refreshed perspective better positions you to evaluate the difficult moral decisions that often present themselves. Your aim is to have a greater understanding of the issues faced and how to deal with them. Lastly, a review of morality can assist with scope and reference points for self-assessment.

Morality in both action and decisions exists within ‘The Three Precepts.’ These in turn present themselves or are manifested in more recognisable forms of our behaviour. These behaviours can be grouped into ‘like’ parts which are presented as ‘The Particulars.’ The flow from ‘Precept’ to ‘Particular’ is neither perfect nor complete, but rather as a generalised guide to assist understanding.

Precept	Manifestation	Particular
Not Causing harm	Rules of conduct	Ethics
Doing good	Altruism	Philanthropy
Being good	Character	Virtue

Table 6 - Recognising Morality

Part 1 through to Part 3 of ‘TODAY’ deals with morality from the perspective of ‘The Precepts’ and provides a basis for understanding morality. Further reading and discussion from multiple sources should be undertaken to achieve a diversity of points of view. There is no correct doctrine on ‘what is morality’ but rather, subjective points of view. A study of moral doctrine is worthwhile but only to the point where the same concepts are seen repeatedly. At some stage, theory must acquiesce to action. Upon achieving greater awareness of morality, the logical next step is to look at oneself.

Step 2 – Make a Self- assessment

‘Part 4 – Self’ and ‘Part 5 – The World Around Us, as well as ‘Part 7 – Reflection’; of ‘TODAY’ are useful as a background to self-assessment. The ‘Relational Model’ used in PART 2 – Perspective; can be used to scope a self-assessment. The level or placement within a scale or point of reference is up to you as the person doing the self-assessment. One of the aims of Step 1 is to assist with self-assessment.



Figure 34 – Self Assessment

The table below is based on ‘The Relational Model’ with columns added with suggested subjects (plus and minus) as a basis to doing a self-assessment. The table can be used to assess the occurrences you experience and the intensity within each of the plus and or minus subjects.

Item	Plus	Minus
Persona <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intent not to cause harm • Help and support to others • Support to the environment 	Thoughts to avoid harm Actions to avoid harm Actions of help and support Actions to preserve the environment	Thoughts of harm Actions of harm Obstruction to support and help Absence of support and help Absence of environmental concern
Character <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtue • Vice 	Examples of virtue	Examples of vice
Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind • Beneficial • Honourable • Worthy 	List of good actions	List of bad actions
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good • Proper • Just • Correct 	List of influenced/contributed right outcomes	List of influenced/contributed wrong outcomes

Table 7 - Morality Self-assessment

Whether you use the above table or not, the outcome is how you feel about your morality and your perception of a need to improve or not.

Step 3 – Determine an End State

Step 3 is a determination and statement of your desired moral state. It is where you want to be with regards to your Persona, Character, Actions and Outcomes. This is different for everyone and may range from enjoying life morally to living for a moral outcome.



Figure 35 – Determine an End State

There is no emphasis on where you should be within this range, but rather an effort for continuous improvement and self-reflection. As this step is personal, minimal guidance or assistance is offered. You must decide where you want to be morally. Listing items for improvement and items to discontinue provides some help and the table below follows on from Step 2 where the 'Improve' and 'Cease and desist' columns can be used to list potential changes to your current thinking or actions.

Item	Improve	Cease and desist
Persona • Intent not to cause harm • Help and support to others • Support to environment	Thoughts to avoid harm Actions to avoid harm Actions of help and support Actions of environment preservation	Thoughts of harm Actions of harm Obstruction to support and help Absence of support and help Absence of environmental concern
Character • Virtue • Vice	Virtue	Vice
Actions • Kind • Beneficial • Honourable • Worthy	Good actions	Bad actions
Outcomes • Good • Proper • Just • Correct	Influence & contribution to right outcomes	Influence & contribution to wrong outcomes

Table 8 - Improvement and Self Reflection

Step 4 - Commit

Commitment is an emotional dedication to a desired end state. A moral improvement commitment is a decision, with emotional attachment to your achieving a level of improved mortality.

A commitment may be internalised and not shared. The advantage of making an undeclared commitment is that it provides freedom from judgement and fear of failure. It may also be publicly declared. The advantage of making a declared commitment is that it inspires achievement through wanting to be seen as succeeding as judged by others. Support and assistance can be solicited from others who are aware of the declared commitment. A publicly declared commitment is a positive moral action that inspires others to make a similar commitment. It also fosters association of persons of similar commitment. Part 7 – Reflection of ‘TODAY’, provides an example for making a public declaration for commitment to a moral life.

Whether or not you make a private or public declaration, what is important is making and maintaining a commitment.



Figure 36 – Commit

Step 5 - Act

By the time Step 5 is reached, you should have a good understanding of morality, self-assessment, and an idea of your desired end-state. Having come this far you should also have commitment. Once these are complete, the time for action has arrived! Act, but in a considered manner, as thoughtful acts are the ones most likely to achieve success.

Your action on improved morality need to be based on:

- Accepting ethical frameworks.
- Undertaking purposeful and ad hoc acts of kindness and goodness.
- Growing your virtues and denying vice.
- Seeking council and advice (feedback) on moral conduct and acting accordingly.



Figure 37 – Act

There are forces that will work against your moral actions. To deal with these, the following will assist:

- Wisdom
 - Insight – (particularly into what we see, hear, and are told).
 - Awareness – (particularly of prejudice, subjectiveness, commissions, others' motivation).
 - Mindfulness – (attentiveness to external goings on).
 - Balance – (avoidance of fanaticism and extremism).
- Commitment
 - Effort – (to keep going).
 - Objectivity – (to balance vice and corruption).
 - Concentration – (as applied to problem solving and reaching goals).
 - Association – (to inspire - to be inspired - to avoid temptation and to avoid negative influence).

This is not to say that morality is only for the wise and the committed, but rather to say that thinking wisely and being committed is supportive to desired moral outcomes.

Actions to improve moral existence are different for everyone. Some of this is personal, but for others the difference will come from external influences such as:

- Beliefs.
- Laws.
- Politics

As such, there is little to be gained by comparing yourself to others. We all have our own beliefs and politics. Also, advice and judgement received from others (who experience their own external influences) requires particularly wise assessment.

Improvement as a process

The five steps to moral improvement have been presented in a linear fashion however as previously stated; they are a continuous process. We are constantly influenced by external factors and changing circumstances and therefore we need to continually reassess where our actions are in relation to our desired moral position.

In addition to the linear steps to improvement, the improvement process can be viewed as an ongoing circular action comprising four parts:

- Current Morality.
- Desired Morality.
- Morality Compass.
- Improved Morality.

This is depicted in 'The Morality Improvement Process' below:

The Morality Improvement Process

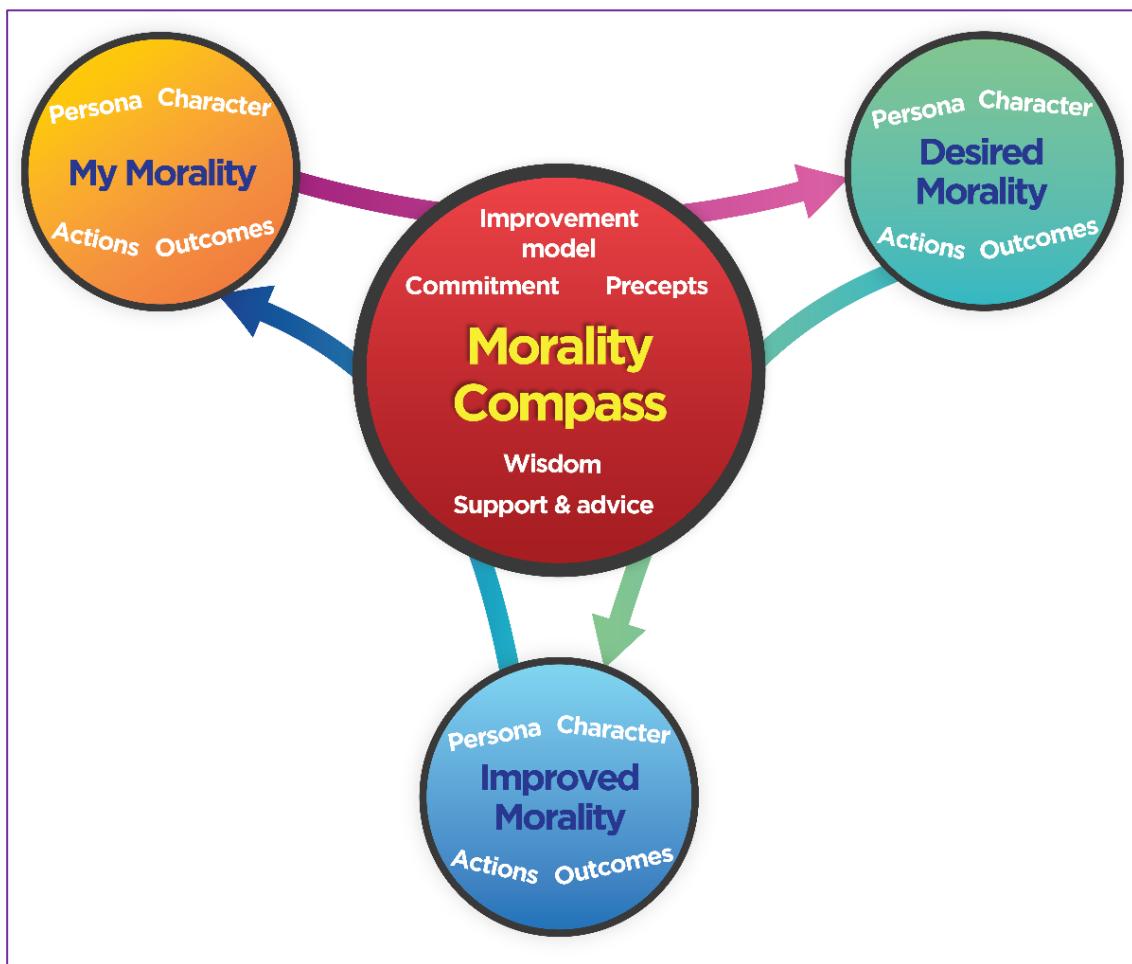


Figure 38 – The Morality Improvement Process

This circular process is continually influenced by:

- Temptations and influence of vice and corruption.
- Application of 'The Precepts.'
- Support and advice received.
- Application of our wisdom and commitment.

The 'Moral Improvement Model,' (see Part 7 – Reflection) provides a simplified description of what is needed for moral improvement and is expanded in the 'Moral Compass' below which depicts moral improvement from a more holistic point of view as influenced by many factors. A more in-depth version of 'The Moral Compass' is also provided at Annex B.

The Moral Compass

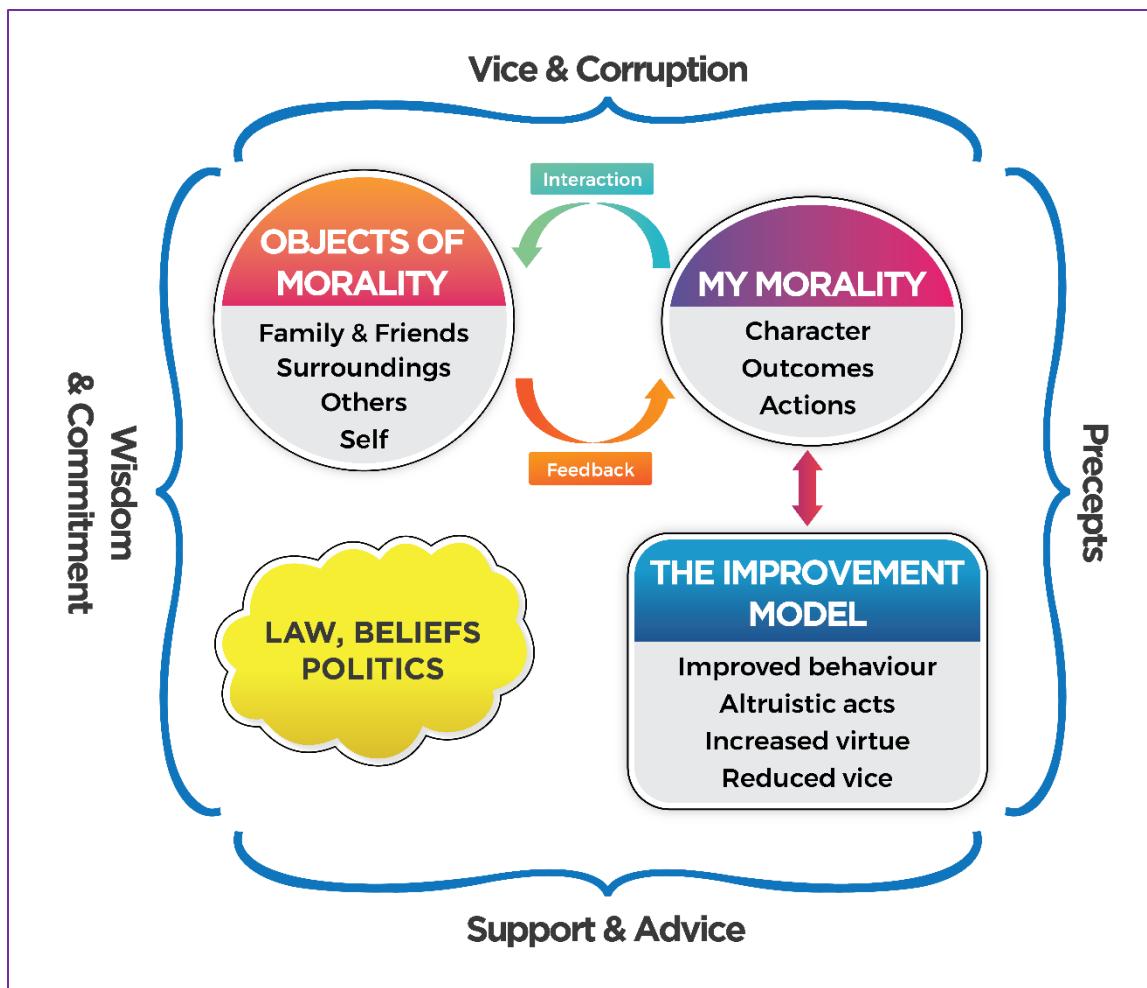


Figure 39 – The Moral Compass

EPILOGUE

Aim for success in all you do, embrace failure, and be a morally good person.

Having reached this part of ‘TODAY,’ hopefully you have a better understanding of morality and have been inspired to improve yourself. Or at the very least, some discussion of these topics has occurred, and you have greater insight into yourself. Additionally, you have a greater appreciation of what is **good**, what is **bad**, what is **sin** and what is **evil**.

My wish is that ‘TODAY’ has contributed to your happiness and contentment in a world of greater peace and harmony.

Simon Peter Knightley

Yesterday

has been and gone

Tomorrow

never comes. There is only

TODAY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nothing is new.

‘TODAY’ is secular but acknowledges both Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, and Islamic philosophies as sources of moral inspiration with insights gained from the Ten Commandments, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path.

Patrick Dankert. - A fellow collaborator, and friend.

Hany Biswas - Illustrator

Annexes:

- A. Decision Helper
- B. The Moral Compass

ANNEX A – Decision Helper (DH)

The ‘Decision helper’ (DH) is a common risk strategy applied to moral risk. The aim is to improve the outcomes of moral actions and decisions through consideration of unintended consequences.

The ‘DH’ comprises three steps. The objective of the first step is to consider two other possible outcomes from the intended one. These are possibilities where the outcome is different from what is expected.

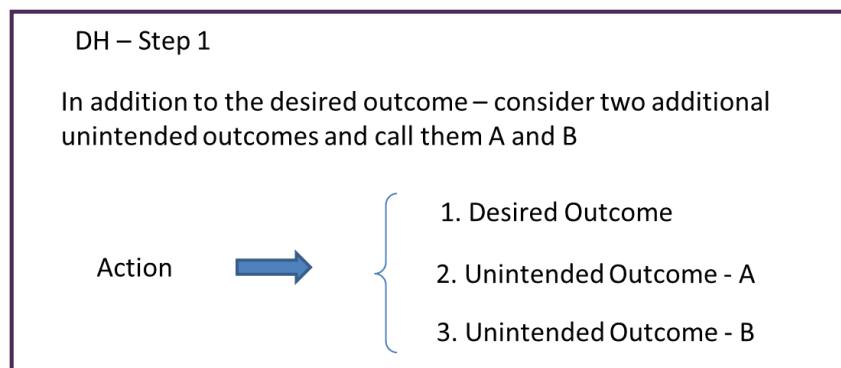


Figure 40 – Annex A Decision Helper Step 1

The second step is to consider three consequences for each of the three identified outcomes. These do not have to be negative; they might also be positive.

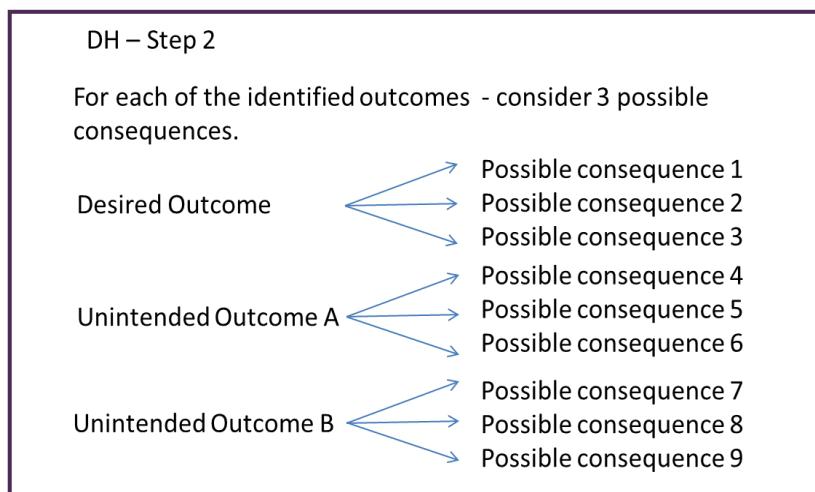


Figure 41 – Annex A Decision Helper Step 2

The final and third step is to attribute both likelihood (likely, possible, unlikely) and impact of the outcome (catastrophic, significant, minimal). This can be accomplished by creating a small table and inputting subjective ratings as depicted in the following example.

Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Analysis
1	likely	significant	L & S
2	unlikely	catastrophic	U & C
3	unlikely	significant	U & S
4	unlikely	minimal	U & M
5	unlikely	minimal	U & M
6	possible	significant	P & S
7	unlikely	minimal	U & M
8	unlikely	minimal	U & M
9	possible	minimal	P & M

Table 9 – Annex A - Decision Helper Table Step 3 Analysis

The fourth column in the table above is an objective personal perspective where the ratings from the other two columns are combined. Where an outcome is rated catastrophic and likely, (C & L) the taker of the action must either consider not taking the action at all or finding some means to mitigate this outcome by reducing the likelihood or impact. The objective of this step is to reach one of three decisions: do not act; mitigate your actions or proceed and accept the risks.

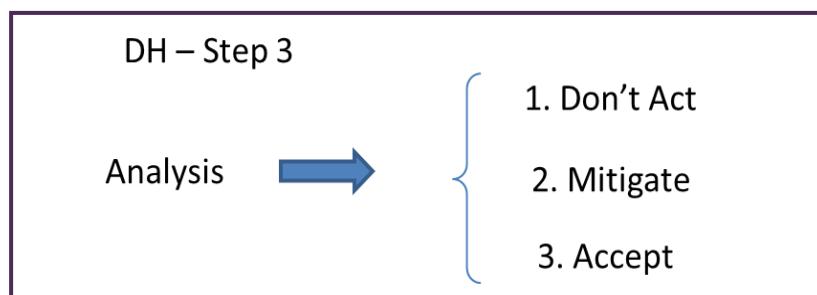


Figure 42 – Annex A Decision Helper Step 3

ANNEX B – The Moral Compass

The Moral Compass in detail:

The Moral Compass - Expanded

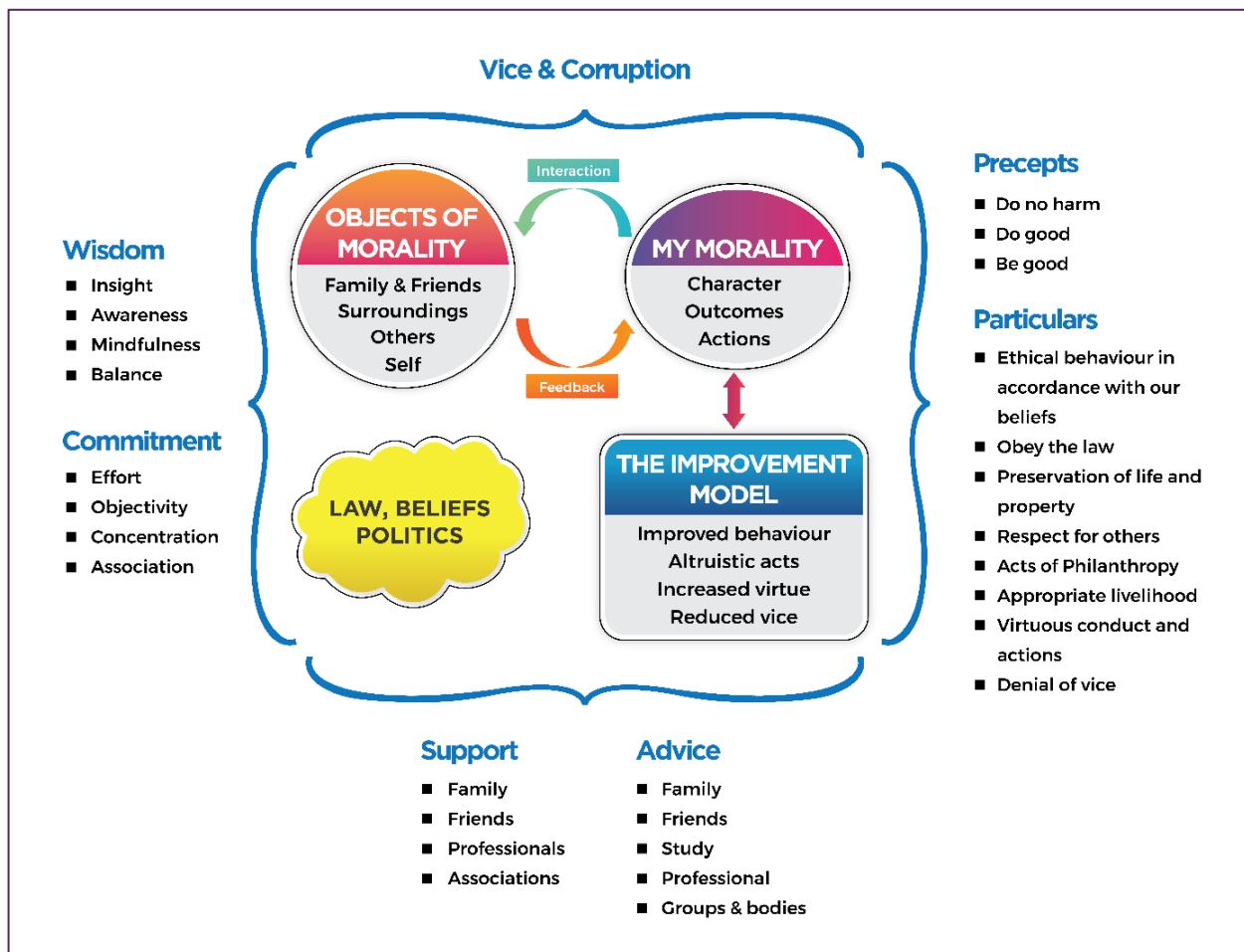


Figure 43 – Annex B The Moral Compass Expanded
