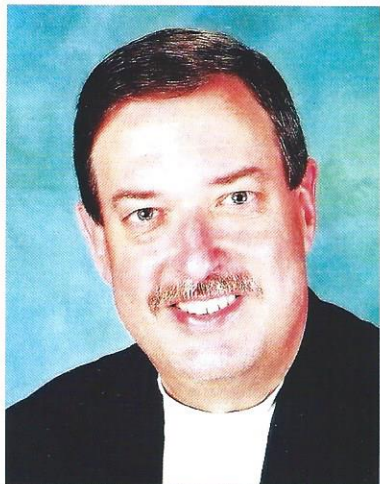


# 10 Principles for a Happy Life and Career

## *Don't Rule Out Principles*



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**By Michael A. Crawford, CPA**

*Editor's Note: Mike Crawford has, by even his own accounts, had a successful and happy career as a CPA in Oklahoma. He says there are 10 basic principles that have guided him through a joyful life and a fulfilling career. In this and future issues of CPAFOCUS, Crawford shares that idea and those principles.*

A common thread that binds us all in this world is the pursuit of happiness—the basic human desire that transcends all civilizations, societies, cultures and religions. Happiness, real and genuine, is the essence of a life well lived. However, in the pursuit of genuine happiness, we live our lives within the constraints of a set of moral principles and rules. While rules will vary among civilizations, societies, cultures and religions, the basic overarching principles for moral human behavior are essentially the same.

From the day we are old enough to comprehend instructions, we are bombarded with a relentless barrage of rules by those in authority, such as government, parents, teachers, employers, ministers and the like. So many rules, in fact, that it often becomes difficult, if not impossible, for the normal mind to remember them all.

Rules play an important role in the education of our children, who begin their lives morally immature and are in the earliest stages of their ethical development. Specific dos and don'ts serve as understandable teaching tools for developing their initial sense of right and wrong. However, as children mature, these rules should take a back seat to the moral principles that overarch them.

Take the so-called golden rule for example: Do unto others as you would

have them do unto you. One who lives life consistently practicing the principles of kindness and compassion need not be reminded of this golden rule. His or her actions are automatically golden.

*"The golden rule is that there are no golden rules." - George Bernard Shaw*

Let's compare and contrast principles and rules in simple terms. Visualize a tree with its roots, trunk and many branches. The roots and trunk serve as the foundation (principles) from which the branches (rules) are developed. While branches may be broken, if the roots and trunk are still solid and healthy, the tree will survive and grow.

Principles serve as an internal guiding sense of responsibility and obligation for proper conduct in life. In other words, they are the internal framework of right and wrong that guides our actions. Rules represent an external directive to act in a certain way under a set of circumstances (often someone else's sense of right and wrong that compels us to do or not do something).

Principles can generally be summed up in a single word like "honesty." Rules must be communicated in a series of words such as "don't lie on a job application."

Rules are often considered a necessity by those who are not inclined to think for themselves and make choices. Such individuals perceive a need for their actions to be controlled by a checklist of specific requirements as opposed to a decision-making process that follows broad guidelines. People often try to find clever ways to get around rules, while there is no real way to get around principles.



I don't want to imply that rules are bad and were meant to be broken. Indeed, rules can help direct us through specific circumstances and can provide order in a chaotic and complex world. But it can also be said that rules are only good for those inclined to follow them, and they don't compensate for bad character. When your

life's actions are based on strong moral principles, you don't find yourself needing to rationalize bad behavior or making excuses for breaking rules.

In coming issues of CPAFOCUS, I will share with you the 10 principles that have served me well and contributed the most to my happy life and career. ☺

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