

The Golden Rule in world religions

Treat others and the planet as you would wish to be treated.

In this lesson for Religious Education, learners examine the Golden Rule as it is expressed through major world religions and cultures through time. They find out that many major belief systems include the Golden Rule as an important way of expressing belief and think about how they can apply it in their own lives.

Learning objectives

- Learners learn how the Golden Rule appears as a main belief of several religions and worldviews
- Learners think about how that belief can be applied in our everyday lives, as a way of expressing belief or expressing values, to build caring and respectful relationships with each other

You will need

- A set of *Golden Rule statements* for each group of learners
- *Golden Rule in world religions* PowerPoint slides on screen

Starter (5 mins)

Get learners into small groups and provide each group with a set of Golden Rule Statements. They take turns reading them to each other. You could encourage them to have a short conversation about what they might mean, or where they might come from. Ask learners if the statements are easy to understand, or whether they will need some thinking and discussion before learners can decode them.

Main activity (20-25 mins)

Learners work in their groups to complete a series of short tasks based on the statements, sorting them and discussing them to build familiarity and to help decode them. Use the PowerPoint slides to guide learners through this. The tasks will help learners identify what the statements have in common; that is, they are all versions of the Golden Rule, that we should *treat others and the planet how we wish to be treated*.

When learners have worked through the tasks, ask them to spend a few minutes writing or rehearsing to tell the class their own version of it, that their families and friends would understand.

Plenary (10-15 mins)

Show learners the Golden Rule – *have they written a version of this themselves?* Ask them a few questions to reflect on the Golden Rule:

- *Do you think it is easy to follow this rule?*
- *How would your school/your town/the world be different if everyone lived by this rule? [adjust this question as you see appropriate for your learners]*
- *Do you agree with the version on screen, or is yours better?*
- *Can you think of a time when someone has applied the Golden Rule? How about a time when they haven't? How did it make you feel?*
- *Can you think of a way you can, or you wish others would apply it in everyday life?*

Extension

Learners could use their statements to create a display or posters for their class or corridor about the Golden Rule, showing how they have interpreted it.



Golden Rule Statements

Treat others and the planet as you would wish to be treated

In happiness and misery, in the agreeable and the disagreeable, one should judge effects as if they came to one's own self¹

Treat others as you want to be treated, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets²

Each one should do unto others as he would have others do unto him³

Hurt not others with what pains yourself⁴

What is hateful to yourself, don't do to another. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary.⁵

None of you is a true believer unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.⁶

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights ... and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood⁷

¹ Mahabharata bk. 13, Hinduism, c. 400BC

² Bible, Matthew 7:12. Christianity, c.4 BC-65 AD

³ Inca leader Manco Capac, Peru, c. 1200

⁴ Dhammapada, Northern Canon 9:18, Buddha, 563-483 BC

⁵ Rabbi Hillel in Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud 56a, Judaism, 30 BC – 10 AD.

⁶ Via several Hadiths: Bukhari 1:2:12, Muslim 1:72f, and An-Nawawi 13), Muhammad, 610

⁷ United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

