

The Velveteen Principles

A Guide to Becoming Real

Course Information

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Community Correctional Training Unit – Stillwater
Oklahoma Department of Corrections

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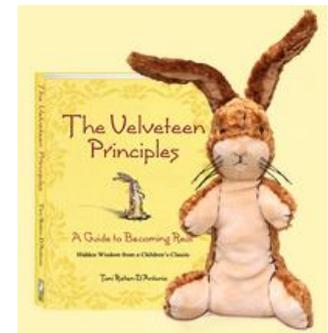
Credit: 2 Hours – CLEET & Supervisory

Material Used with Permission:

The Velveteen Principles by

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

<http://www.velveteenprinciples.com/>



Why Soft Skills?

Within the workforce, a gap exists between technical skill knowledge and non-technical work behaviors. It's been stated that 15% of career success depends on technical competence, while 85% depends on interpersonal skills. This "skills gap" differentiates between academic and behavioral skills.

In addition to cognitive and technical skill, non-technical affective skill is needed to develop conscientious, active, and productive employees.

"The Velveteen Principles," and other soft skills such as team building, leadership, or coaching, aim to bring about a shift in the behavioral mechanisms of every participant, thereby enriching personal lives and enabling better work performance.

Participants will be prepared to stretch beyond their comfort zones in order to become leaders. These acquired skills will make a significant impact on the working environment maximizing their contribution to the organization.



The Objective of This Course

is to help you use the Velveteen Principles to:

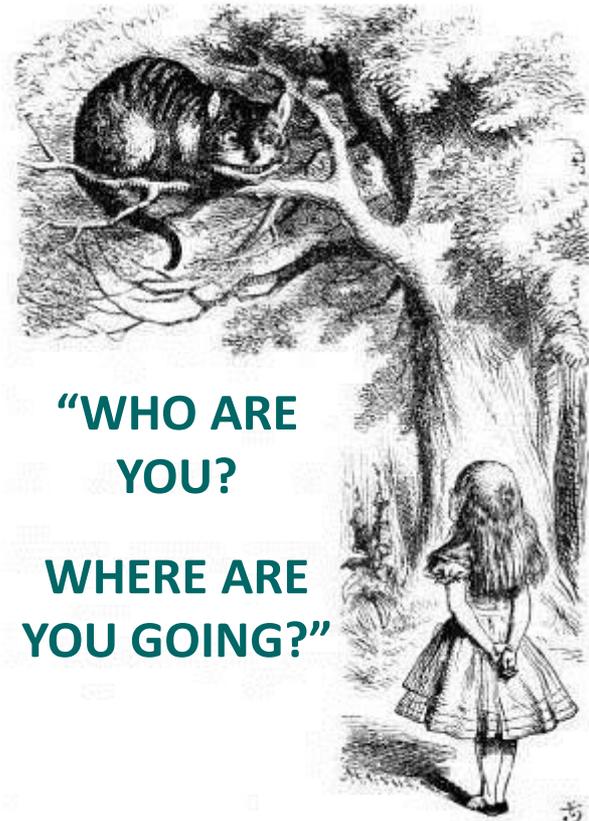
- Recognize what is *Real*
- Build character and in the process, discover your *Real* self
- Shape a life based on your own values, talents, and passion
- Develop courage, honesty, empathy, generosity, and an ethical approach to life, work, and relationships
- Gain a deeper respect for yourself and others
- Understand that you don't have to be perfect to be worthy

Introduction

Children's books often take center stage for grown-up wisdom.

Two questions
were asked of
Alice...

How would you answer?

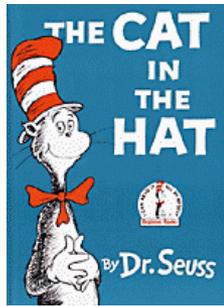


**“WHO ARE
YOU?”**

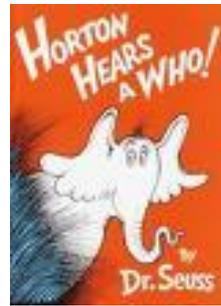
**WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?”**

Introduction

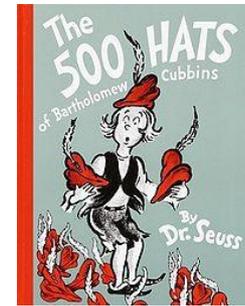
Examples of Grown-up Wisdom from Dr. Seuss...



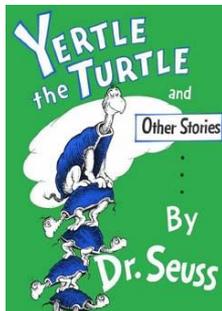
Have fun,
but clean
up your
mess.



“A person's
a person,
no matter
how small.”



Never
give up.



Don't inflate
yourself at the
expense of others.

In order to enjoy a children's book,
one must be a child.

In order to understand it,
one must be an adult.

In order to appreciate it,
one must be both.

The Velveteen Rabbit

Synopsis: Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

The Velveteen Rabbit, first published in 1922, follows life in a little boy's nursery where a new arrival, a stuffed bunny covered with inexpensive fabric, copes with the insecurity of being compared with the other playthings.

As author Margery Williams writes, “He was naturally shy, and being only made of velveteen, some of the more expensive toys quite snubbed him.” While he longed to fit in with his peers, the Rabbit hoped even more to become special to the Boy.

Abandoned after the excitement of Christmas, the Rabbit is soothed by the wise, old, “Skin Horse” who predicts that the Boy will eventually love him. The horse is right, and the Velveteen Rabbit is selected to comfort the Boy through a terrible illness.



The Velveteen Rabbit

Synopsis: Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

The Boy's relationship with the bunny and the experiences they share transform it from a toy into something the Skin Horse calls Real.

To paraphrase the horse, Real is what happens when you become your true self, not a contrived, shiny, pretend thing, and are loved despite, and maybe even because of, your imperfections.

TO READ THE STORY ONLINE, CLICK:

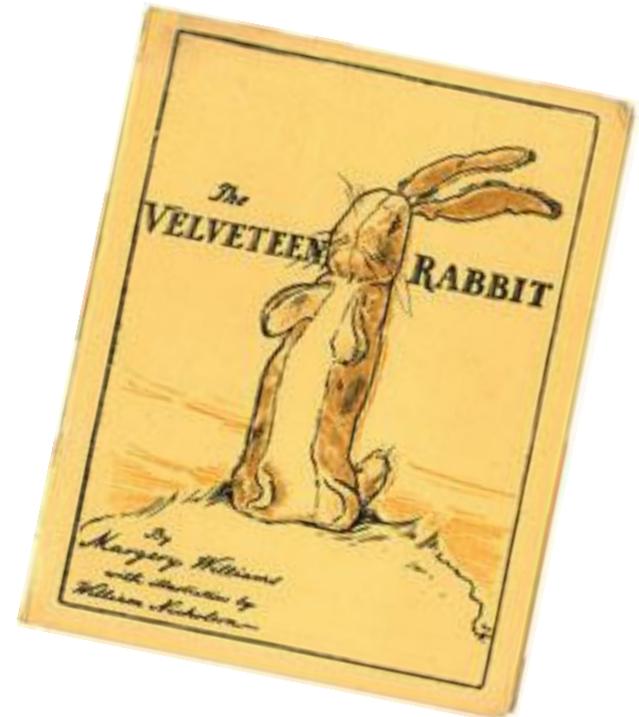
[The Velveteen Rabbit](#)

The Velveteen Rabbit

Synopsis: Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

The Velveteen Rabbit is a classic parable, with the subtle power to provoke our deepest desires and inspire reflection. It reminds us of basic truths about what we all long for in our hearts.

The Velveteen Principles honors the Williams classic by interpreting its message as an inspiration for life in our time.



What is REAL?

From *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Marjory Williams

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."



What is REAL?

From *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Marjory Williams

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn't happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby.



But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.”

What Does it Mean To Be Real?

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

For the Velveteen Rabbit, becoming Real meant learning to be truly himself and not a version of something he thought he was supposed to be. Because it's based on our individuality, Real is different for everyone, just as life's meaning is different for everyone, too.

But we can agree that in all cases it includes feelings of happiness and contentment, work that is engaging, relationships that feel satisfying, and enough love that we don't feel alone in the world.

The qualities that make us Real, including courage, honesty, gratitude, and flexibility help us to connect with others and live in a more engaged, appreciative and deeply satisfying way.



What Does it Mean To Be Real?

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

Becoming Real is living in the moment with the deepest respect for yourself and others.

It is a way of thinking that allows us to express ourselves and experience life – including its stress, conflicts, sorrows, and losses – with grace, kindness and integrity.

Once you are Real, and you know that everything you say and do matters to others, you can also understand that we each leave a mark on the world that remains long after we're gone.



What are Principles?

- Principles are very basic and essential guides that help us make decisions.
- Principles are a concept or ideal that can be applied to choices and competing interests.
- Although principles at first glance look to be general and nonspecific, can be applied to the most specific and difficult of situations.



What Are The Velveteen Principles?

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

The Velveteen Principles is a guide to becoming *Real*: Real with ourselves, Real with our hopes and desires, Real with the people we love, Real with those at work, and everyone else, too.

Through the simple wisdom of a children's classic, it invites us to strip off the trappings of our “object-culture” and remember the things that make us unique, happy and worthy of love. And it shows us that, just as it was for the Velveteen Rabbit, *Real* is a process that is sometimes intimidating and sometimes painful, but in the end far more rewarding than we ever could have imagined.

In a time when the pursuit of instant gratification and the stress of daily life can swamp us and cause us to "break easily or have sharp edges," these principles offer a safe and steady course toward peace and self-acceptance.



What Are The Velveteen Principles?

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

Eventually the Velveteen Rabbit came to believe he was *Real*, and this belief spurred his transformation. For him, belief became *Reality*. The same can be true for us. Indeed, the connections between what we believe, what we then feel and, finally, how we behave is essential to becoming *Real*.

BELIEFS —————> **FEELINGS** —————> **BEHAVIOR**

It's easy to lose our way. It's easy to forget the simple joys of life. But with the help of a wise old skin horse and a sawdust-filled bunny, The Velveteen Principles will set you back on the course to *Real*, and remind you that *Real* isn't how you are made, it's something inside of you.



What Are The Velveteen Principles?

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

- #1: Real is Possible
- #2: Real is a Process
- #3: Real is Emotional
- #4: Real is Empathetic
- #5: Real is Courageous
- #6: Real is Honest
- #7: Real is Generous
- #8: Real is Grateful
- #9: Real Can Be Painful
- #10: Real is Flexible
- #11: Real Love Endures
- #12: Real is Ethical

The Velveteen Principles
honor the person you
were meant to be.

It is the gift of *Real*.

And once you are *Real*,
things will never be the
same....



Stop and Reflect...

In the quiet of your mind, what do you believe about yourself and your value as a person?

Is it based on...

the vehicle you drive?

where you work?

your success?

what you do?

your possessions?

your appearance?

OR,
is it based on
who you are?

your social status?



Choosing Empathy

If your value is based on the world's standards, understand that those judgments are destructive. However, you can choose new beliefs and values based on your true (i.e. *Real*) self.

You have to care enough about yourself to start making changes. This level of caring is called “self-empathy.”

Self-empathy involves tuning in to your own heart and mind as you go through each day. Value your own responses and consider them when making choices and decisions.

Self-empathy is lost when we conform to others and deny our own individuality. Self-empathy can be recovered when we begin to look at ourselves with loving and accepting eyes.



The Magic of Empathy

- As we learn to apply empathy to ourselves, we naturally begin to use it with others.
- Empathy brings dramatic changes to relationships: children, older parents, coworkers. Empathy is what makes it possible for individuals, groups, and even nations to coexist.
- Empathy is a major contribution to the development of character. Character is dominated by our sense of ethics and values. Honesty, kindness, selflessness, and courage are only possible with empathy. *REAL* character brings us into supportive work relationships, friendships, and marriages.
- Empathy brings an ever-deepening appreciation for life's challenges and experiences.
- Over time, empathy helps us to respect and admire others and ourselves for having grown, adapted, and survived.



The Magic of Empathy

- In the workplace, honesty, integrity and an excellent work ethic are the benchmark for empathy and *Real* character.
- Empathy allows us to understand that scars, wrinkles, and imperfections are merely evidence that we have lived and loved, just like the Velveteen Rabbit.

Imperfections are not flaws
at all, but instead,
evidence of a lifetime
of experiences.



Principle # 1

Real is Possible

For a long time he lived in in the toy cupboard or on the nursery floor, and no one thought very much about him. He was naturally shy, and being only made of velveteen, some of the more expensive toys quite snubbed him. The mechanical toys were very superior, and looked down upon everyone else; they were full of modern ideas and pretended they were real.

Principle # 1

Real is Possible

The plot of *The Velveteen Rabbit* revolves around his quest to become *Real* and resolve the doubt about his own identity and worth. However, notice that this process begins from the moment he learns that such a thing is possible.

BELIEFS → **FEELINGS** → **BEHAVIOR**

The essence of what is *Real* – kindness, empathy, and individuality – is already there. It was born in him. But he had become insecure with the pressure of living among toys who valued only mechanical perfection and the most modern ideas.

The same basic truth – that what is *Real* waits inside – applies to all of us. Watch children! They show us *Real*.

Principle # 1

Real is Possible

Sadly, most of us lose touch with this as we move through life. Society's one-size-fits-all recipe for success requires us to conform, ignores our individuality, and thus disconnects us from what is *Real*.

Often, when we are supposed to feel successful, we may instead feel disappointed, empty, and unfulfilled.

The media is one reason we lose touch with reality and our individuality. A great many people have lost track of their *Real* talents, gifts, desires, dreams, and passion.

We can struggle only so much to keep up with society's expectations.



Principle # 1

Real is Possible

When we begin to realize that we've devoted ourselves to false ideas, we have a tendency to get lost in blaming ourselves. Not only is this a waste of time, it's a bad analysis.

With so many powerful cultural forces pushing us to conform, how much control do we actually have?

Only when we recognize the conflict, may we begin the process of soul-searching and reflecting.

Understanding that the key to a more satisfying *Real* life waits inside us, the transformation has already started.



Principle # 1

Real is Possible



In order to live by our own design,
a *Real* life is possible.

We take a giant step toward *Reality*, when:

- We decide that we want to rediscover our individual values, passions and hopes.
- We develop all the qualities we need, like courage and generosity.
- We are realistic when we honor our special abilities, interests and dreams.



Principle # 1

Real is Possible

From the very moment he realized that he wanted to be *Real*, the Velveteen Rabbit was making it happen. And the rewards make the struggle worthwhile.



“... He gave one leap and the joy of using those hind legs was so great that he went springing about the turf on them, jumping side-ways and whirling around as the others did...”

He was a Real Rabbit, at last.”

Principle # 1

Stop and Reflect...

Have you lost touch with your *Real* self?

Your interests, passions, and values?

How easy is it to be pushed off course by society's expectations?

Check priorities. Are they *Real*?

What choices could you explore?

How can you take that first step?



Principle # 2

Real is a Process

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse, “You become.” It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or have to be carefully kept.”

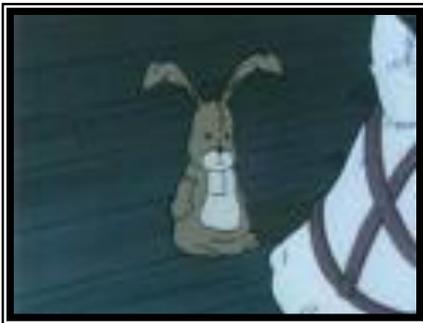


Principle # 2

Real is a Process

The oldest and wisest resident of the nursery is the Skin Horse, a stuffed animal that has been loved so long and so hard that all of his hair has been rubbed off.

The Velveteen Rabbit, a new arrival, recognizes that the Skin Horse is happy, content and secure in a way the other toys are not.



He decides that he wants to be content, too, and he becomes intensely curious about how that might happen.



Principle # 2

Real is a Process

The wind-up toys create instant gratification when their gears start turning. As they move and make noise, they put on impressive displays for everyone to see. But they must be wound up again and again to keep up the charade. Soon springs break. Gears jam. Wheels fall off.



The same thing happens to us when we depend on momentary achievements or “things” to give us a sense of self-worth.

In contrast, the Skin Horse says *Real* is something you become over time. It is the process of discovering and defining yourself and then cultivating a life that fits those defining qualities.

Principle # 2

Real is a Process

The Following Basic Human Needs and Desires Make Us Feel More *Real*:

- **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS**

This is only accomplished when we are honest with ourselves and with others.

- **WORK THAT MATTERS**

Money is not the issue. Work must contribute something worthwhile and have a positive effect on ourselves and our community.

- **CREATIVITY AND GROWTH**

When we learn something new, try something new, or create something new, we become more *Real*.

- **GIVING TO OTHERS**

Opportunities can be found everywhere to teach, coach, nurture, mentor, and care for others.

BELIEFS → **FEELINGS** → BEHAVIOR



Principle # 2

Real is a Process

In The Previous List, Did You Notice...

There's nothing to buy!

WAIT!! There's more!!

There's nothing you have to earn or accomplish!

Relationships, Meaningful
Work, Creative Activities,
and Giving to Others are
all a **PROCESS** !



Principle # 2

Stop and Reflect...

This Process Requires Patience

We live in a frantic world of instant gratification, of fast food and faster Internet. Instead of pushing ahead, take time to slow down...

- To think and consider
- To share the precious gift of time and yourself
- To become more patient

You're on your way to becoming *Real!*
This process is a long endeavor, so *be patient.*
Real offers deep rewards everyday.



Principle # 3

Real is Emotional

That night, and for many nights after, the Velveteen Rabbit slept in the Boy's bed. At first he found it rather uncomfortable, for the Boy hugged him very tight, and he sometimes pushed him so far under the pillow that the Rabbit could scarcely breathe... But very soon he grew to like it, for the Boy used to talk to him, and made nice tunnels for him under the bedclothes that he said were like the burrows the real rabbits lived in.



Principle # 3

Real is Emotional

Feelings play a big role in *The Velveteen Rabbit*. At various points the Rabbit feels insecure, impatient, frightened, and loving. He continually expresses a constant and intense emotional longing to be as *Real* as the Skin Horse.

The horse makes it very clear that the process of becoming *Real* depends on understanding, acknowledging, and expressing our true emotions.

The Rabbit honestly admits to his discomfort. His ability to do this without denying his feelings frees him to also experience the love and attention the Boy is offering.



Principle # 3

Real is Emotional

Understand that emotions are not superior to reason. We need both. However, our feelings do give us the truest and most immediate feedback possible about many situations.

They flash early warning signals in times of danger and reliable green lights when we encounter something or someone good.

Scientists studying the brain in action find that our feelings signal important information much faster than the rational, reasoning parts of our brains ever could.

We've all been in situations when "something doesn't *feel* right..." Feelings are shortcuts that the mind, especially the *Real* part of the mind, uses to snap us to attention.



Principle # 3

Real is Emotional

Listening to Your Own Emotions

Self-empathy is the one tool that is critical to leaving the object-culture behind and becoming *Real*.

Although it might feel artificial and difficult at first, it doesn't take long for emotional self-empathy to become a habit.

**If it seems self-indulgent, consider the end point:
empathy for others.**

As people learn to recognize and respect their own feelings, they begin to do the same with others. They respect and appreciate others' feelings and idiosyncrasies.



Principle # 3

Real is Emotional

SIDE EFFECT: With family and friends, you might discover you have strong reactions to what is said, or not said, in conversations that once seemed innocuous.

You will eventually learn to manage these feelings and how you respond. You will experience authentic empathy for yourself and others.

Sure, it makes life a little more complicated, but it's also much richer and more *Real* when you can feel what's going on.

Anthropologists have long since said that humans would have never survived if they didn't develop empathy needed to work together, care for each other, and form attachments.



Principle # 3

Stop and Reflect...

Grab a small notebook to carry around.

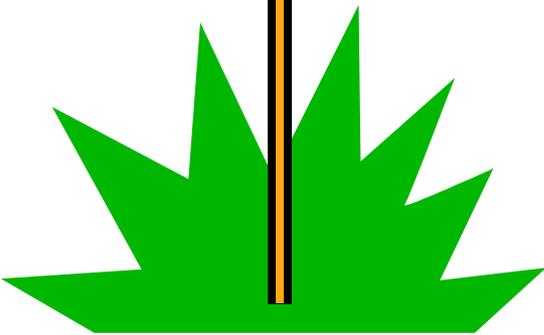
Record your feelings often.

Compare how you feel
with how you act.



Results can be startling.

For example, denied or buried feelings may lead to binging or other behavior not connected to the issue.



Principle # 4

Real is Empathetic

The mechanical toys were very superior, and they looked down upon everyone else. Between them all, the poor little Rabbit was made to feel very insignificant and common-place and the only person who was kind to him at all was the Skin Horse.



Principle # 4

Real is Empathetic

When you are not *Real*, it's nearly impossible to relate to others with patience and understanding. In the story, Timothy the wooden soldier and all the other mechanical toys seem unable to express kindness.

The author notes that the self-important boat has lost “most of his paint.” His insecurity and fear of being seen as less than perfect lay behind this façade of superiority. He couldn't show empathy for others when he was secretly ashamed of himself.

In contrast, the Skin Horse is honest and not ashamed of his imperfect self. When we are like this, it gets much easier to embrace other people as they are.



Principle # 4

Real is Empathetic

The Skin Horse was so *Real* that it was easy for him to recognize the beauty and value in the Rabbit. He readily empathized with the lonely, bashful newcomer and was kind to him from the beginning.

Empathy makes it possible for us to see the goodness, beauty, and positive intent being expressed all around us. Often these qualities are present in situations we would have once found maddening or frustrating.

EMPATHY vs. SYMPATHY

Sympathy = in agreement with; to join.

Empathy = caring, inquiring, and understanding.

Empathy is *NOT* blending yourself emotionally with another person.



Principle # 4

Real is Empathetic

Learning Empathy

Learning to empathize is not easy.... *but it's worth it.*

One of the best techniques to use whenever we've been hurt and/or struggle to comprehend another person's behavior, is to separate the other person's intent from the outcome.

The intent-versus-outcome test works in a great many circumstances.

FOR EXAMPLE: There's an elderly gentleman in front of you, driving 25 mph. You're in a hurry and unable to pass. All kinds of thoughts and words start to surface. However, ask yourself, "Does he intend to hold me up?" No. "Does he intend to make me late?" No. Does he need to turn in his keys? *Probably*, but for now, his intent is not to hurt me. In fact, he may be on his way to the hospital to visit his wife... we have no idea... but at least you've separated the intent from the outcome. And soon you're on your way.



Principle # 4

Real is Empathetic

Living Empathy

Living empathy can be tough in places. In *Real* life, people typically do not set out to hurt us. However, know that good intentions do not erase the damage others may inflict when they are careless, take unnecessary risks, or make bad choices.

Also, know that there are times when empathy won't be a significant part of our dealings with others. There may be very few meetings and work-related situations which would offer us an opportunity to be *Real*.

Real opportunities thrive within relationships.



Principle # 4

Stop and Reflect...

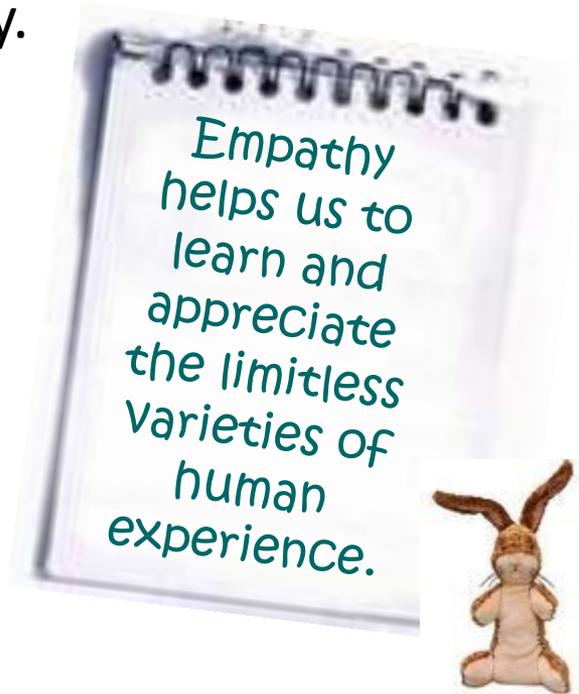
Think of ways you can show empathy within your relationships and with other people. Spend a few minutes of “practice time.”

Try to interpret others’ frustrating actions and choices in the most positive and generous way.



Maximize the number of your *Real* encounters.

Enjoy each day as you increase your level of empathy.



Principle # 5

Real is Courageous

The little Rabbit lay among the old picture-books in the corner of the fowl-house and he felt very lonely... Of what use was it to be loved and lose one's beauty and become Real if it all ended like this? And a tear, a real tear, trickled down his little shabby velvet nose and fell to the ground.



Principle # 5

Real is Courageous

One of the surprising and inspiring elements of the story is the Rabbit's courage. He is mocked, abandoned, rejected, and discouraged.

There are times when he almost gives up, but somehow finds the courage to go on. It's in these moments that something truly extraordinary happens – a toy rabbit cries a *Real* tear.

For the rest of us, becoming *Real* requires bravery as we change up our priorities and present our new selves to friends, loved ones, and coworkers.

Being *Real* doesn't mean you are required to live without fear. Fear, like other basic human traits, is just another part of being *Real*.

Being *Real* means that, even while a lot of things scare us, we cannot let fear run our lives.



Principle # 5

Real is Courageous

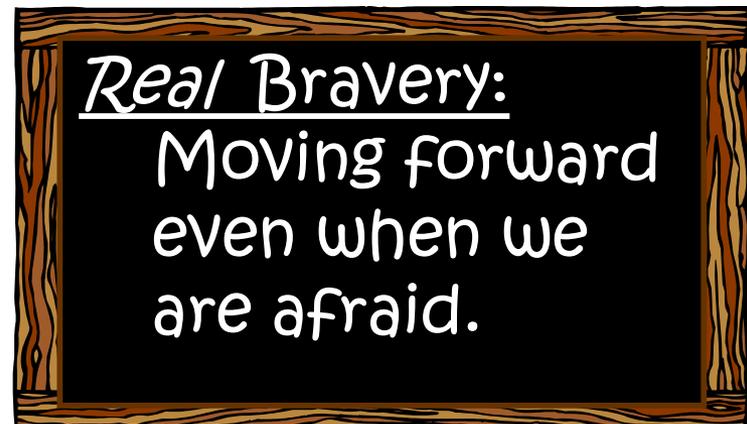
One of the most universal human fears is isolation or rejection. This feeling may arise as we begin to assert our individuality in a world that constantly pressures us to conform.

We live in a time of extraordinary freedom, when most of our limits are determined by our basic practical needs and our own willingness to take risks.

How willing are you to take risks in order to be *Real*? Think of something you've always wanted to do...

Whether it's learning to paint, play tennis, rappel, or join a rock band, let go of the fear of failure.

Failures = learning experiences.



Principle # 5

Real is Courageous

- **Failure leads to growth**

We all learn more from failure than success. The greatest achievements almost always involve setbacks.

- **New beliefs are powerful**

Your positive beliefs can remove the stigma from failure. There is honor and value in trying your best and risking failure.

- **Courage comes with experience**

Take that first step!



Principle # 5

Stop and Reflect...

- How willing are you to take risks in order to be *Real*? One of the great paradoxes of being *Real* is that while we fear it will isolate us, it almost brings us closer to others.
- Bravely show your family, friends and others what you value, and to what you aspire. You are seeking a life that is *Really* you.
- Think about developing a relationship that is based on who you *Really* are, rather than on a false image you constructed to satisfy what you think others expect of you.
- **Suggestions:**
 - Make changes in a gradual way
 - Don't abandon people
 - Explain what you are doing
 - Tell them the change you seek shouldn't hurt anyone



Principle # 6

Real is Honest

The mechanical toys were very superior and pretended they were real ... Even Timothy, the jointed wooden lion put on airs and pretended he was connected with Government.



Principle # 6

Real is Honest

Only the Skin Horse is honest and *Real* throughout the entire story and doesn't pretend to be something he's not. He is the one the Rabbit turns to with questions. If the Skin Horse wasn't always truthful, the Rabbit would never learn all he needs to know in order to become *Real*.

The honesty of the Skin Horse begins with the way he thinks about himself. He is flawed and a bit scarred, but isn't sensitive about his appearance. These imperfections are what make him unique.

Real Honesty:

The ability to be clear-eyed about yourself.

Sometimes it's hard to be honest about ourselves because of an irrational belief that we must be perfect.



Principle # 6

Real is Honest

The Truth About Perfection:

- **Perfection is arbitrary**

Perfection is based on standards that can be changed. Is today's "perfect figure" the same as it was in 1950?

- **Perfection is boring**

Certain objects are flawless, but they soon lose our interest and attention.

- **Human perfection is ultimately impossible**

You cannot name a hero who wasn't flawed in some way. Life is too varied and challenging for anyone to get all of it right.



Principle # 6

Real is Honest

There's much to like in the *Real* you, and being honest means recognizing these positives first.

Open yourself up to the endless possibilities and recognize the long list of things that will make you proud and happy about you.



If that is difficult, think back to the times when you felt proud of yourself, or times when you felt most ashamed. Clues to the *Real* you are hidden in those memories.



Principle # 6

Real is Honest

Recognize that you are a good and worthy person. Accept, and even embrace, parts of yourself that you would rather not recognize.

Exploring negative traits reduces and eventually eliminates the shame we attach to our shortcomings.



If *Realness* is your goal, as opposed to being perfect, the glare of imperfection fades.



Principle # 6

Stop and Reflect...

Draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper to make two columns. On the left-hand side, write down names of people you admire. On the right-hand side, list your reasons for admiring them (virtues, talent, strengths, etc).

Fold the paper along the center line so that only the list of traits can be seen.

Take a good, long look. The things you admire in others are also a part of you.

If you aren't living them right now, that's a valuable piece of information. Now you have an informed choice... **Feel it, face it, fix it.**



Principle # 7

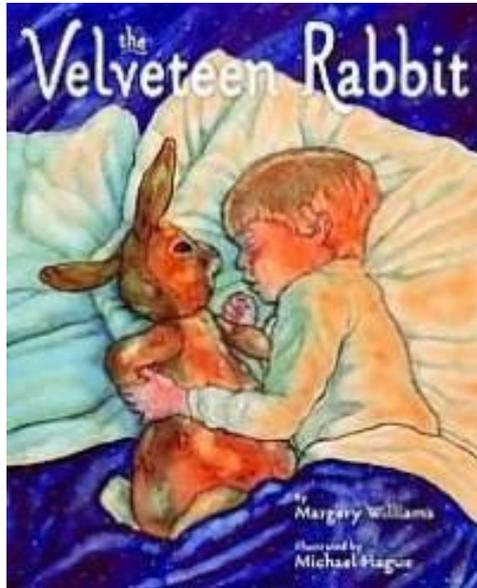
Real is Generous

And then one day the Boy was ill. His face grew flushed and he talked in his sleep, and his little body was so hot that it burned the Rabbit when he held him close. Strange people came and went in the nursery, and a light burned all night and through it all the little Velveteen Rabbit lay there, hidden from sight under the bedclothes, and he never stirred, for he was afraid that if they found him someone might take him away, and he knew that the Boy needed him.



Principle # 7

Real is Generous



Because the transformation is gradual, the Velveteen Rabbit shows signs of being *Real* long before he, or anyone else notices. This becomes evident during the Boy's terrible illness, which is the biggest crisis in the story.

Even though he is being burned, the Rabbit is concerned only about the Boy. His finely-tuned sense of empathy tells him that he has an important role to play. He's there for the Boy.

When we are generous in this way, we support people when they need us most; not when it's convenient for us. It is an expression of goodwill and encouragement.

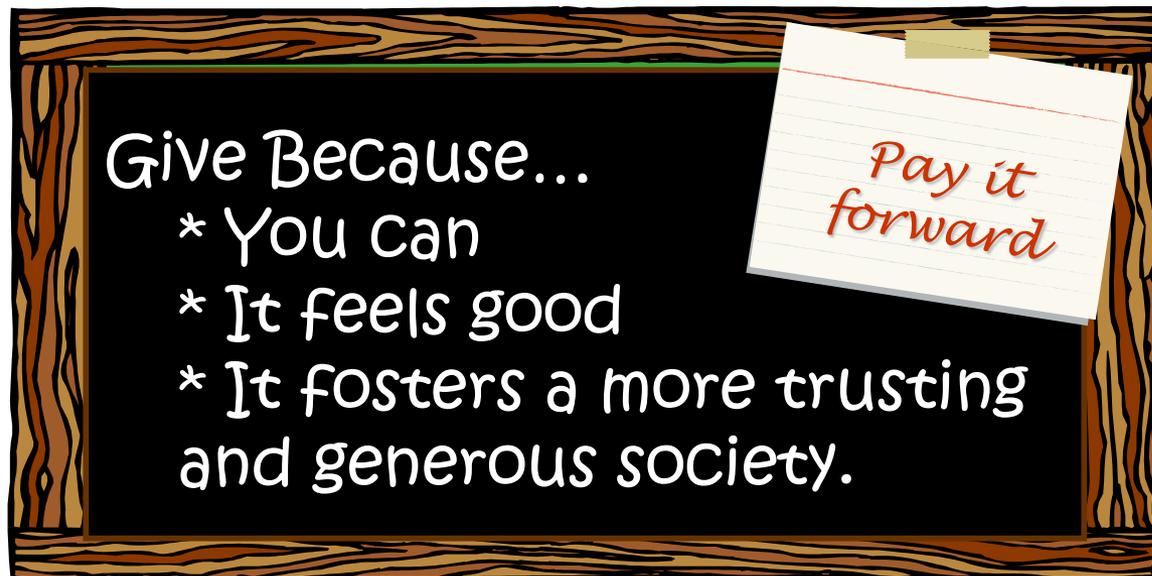


Principle # 7

Real is Generous

Two Kinds of Generosity:

- Supporting those we know and love. This is more than just words. *Real* generosity involves the giving of one's self.
- Encouraging the aspirations of others to change the world in whatever ways we can to make it better. Again, *Real* generosity is getting involved.



Principle # 7

Real is Generous

In the Workplace

If you are enlisted to train a new employee or assigned extra tasks, chances are you won't receive extra pay, and will be expected to keep performing your own duties.

If you approach this with sullen resentment, you may damage your own standing. But if you're open and generous, there's a very good chance that you will create an ally and set a positive standard.



Most experts agree that teamwork, mentoring, and a win-win approach works better in the long run. Among coworkers, these values are conducive to creativity, productivity, and communication that keeps us sharp.

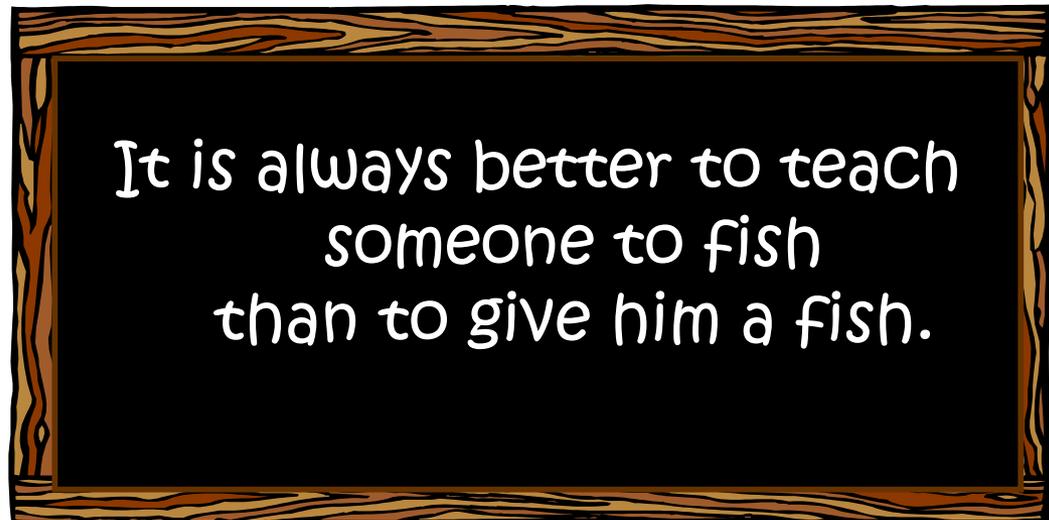


Principle # 7

Stop and Reflect...

- How can you show generosity at home and at work?
- Practice generosity until it becomes a habit.

Know that it is possible to become too generous when it limits the ability to help ourselves. The idea is not to make over someone in our own image, but to promote his/her own development as individuals.



Principle # 8

Real is Grateful

“You must have your old bunny,” [Nana] said. “Fancy all that fuss for a toy!”

The Boy sat up in his bed and stretched out his hands. “Give me my Bunny!” he said. “You mustn’t say that. He isn’t a toy. He’s real!”

When the little Rabbit heard that, he was happy, for he knew that what the Skin Horse had said was true at last. The nursery magic had happened to him. And he was a toy no longer. He was Real. The Boy himself had said it..

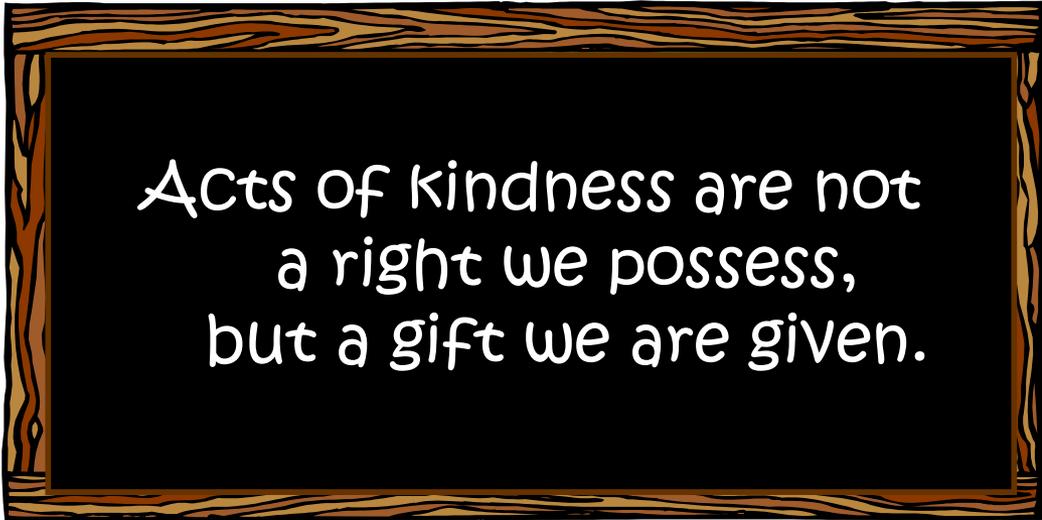


Principle # 8

Real is Grateful

The happiness felt by the Velveteen Rabbit, as the Boy corrected his Nana, is infused with another deep feeling that made the experience even more wonderful – gratitude.

Hearing, “He’s real” from such an important friend was a bold affirmation for which the Rabbit was truly grateful.



Acts of kindness are not
a right we possess,
but a gift we are given.



Principle # 8

Real is Grateful

The Rabbit was focused and truly present. This kind of attentiveness almost always reveals to us moments for which we can be grateful. Gratitude flows when we are able to focus on the positive instead of the negative.

Real gratitude begins by association with both awareness and appreciation:

- **Awareness**

Becoming open and receptive, with senses well-tuned, to the world around us. People who are *Real*, no longer worry about their self-worth but calmly observe everything in their environment.

- **Appreciation**

Recognizing the value in people, experiences and even certain things. Awareness grows into appreciation.



Principle # 8

Stop and Reflect...

To be Grateful:

- Be attentive, focused and fully present.
- Bring an attitude of awareness to ordinary experiences. Notice things you usually take for granted as you go through the day.

- Appreciate the many people who do their jobs well.
- Think of ways to show your gratitude.
- Practice gratitude, *especially* during difficult times.



Principle # 9

Real Can Be Painful

“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”



Principle # 9

Real Can Be Painful



“Pain is something that happens to you.”

-Skin Horse-

The more access you have to your own *Real* thoughts and feelings, the more you will see your own imperfections and limitations. You will hear more clearly the negative thoughts. These revelations can be painful.

As troubling as they may be, these thoughts and feelings have great value because they are a remarkably accurate list of the obstacles that lie between you and a *Real* life.

As you explore and reveal the long-hidden elements of yourself, you will inevitably feel grief and anger. This pain is related to lost opportunities and lost aspects of yourself.



Principle # 9

Real Can Be Painful

Your new *Realistic* perspective may also change how you feel when you are with friends and family.

The pain of this awakening will pass, but that doesn't mean you automatically enter a permanent state of bliss.

Instead, choose to become more sensitive to your own feelings and thoughts, and the experience of others.

Being *Real* doesn't mean changing everything for the sake of change. Think about this journey as a flower opening slowly, rather than exploding fireworks.



Self Discovery
is a slow process



Principle # 9

Real Can Be Painful

Look at a photo of yourself when you were a child. Think of that child as your own. Ask about his/her dreams and interests, talents and desires. Spend time exploring those memories in detail. The discoveries you make will be clues to what can be *Real* in adult life.

The process of becoming *Real* involves:

- acknowledging pain and loss
- recovering valuable pieces of ourselves
- dealing with beliefs and feelings that cause us harm



Principle # 9

Stop and Reflect...

Think about abandoning the generic viewpoint of the majority.

Reflect on your own beliefs and feelings.

Have you been affected by negative messages?

If so, start to replace those old painful thoughts with your own ideas about what makes you a worthy person and what makes your life good.



Principle # 10

Real is Flexible

He saw two strange beings creep out of the tall bracken near him. They were rabbits like himself, but quite furry and brand new. They must have been very well made, for their seams didn't show at all, and they changed shape in a queer way when they moved; one minute they were long and thin and the next minute fat and bunched, instead of staying the same, like he did.



Principle # 10

Real is Flexible

Toward the end of the story, the Velveteen Rabbit sees, for the first time, *Real* rabbits at play in the garden. *Real* rabbits are flexible, and this gives them enormous happiness and pleasure.

For us, the example of the live rabbits in the garden suggests an essential requirement for being *Real* ourselves – the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

We live in an era of enormous change and endless choice, thus flexibility is necessary for anyone who wants to feel safe, happy, and fulfilled.

Inflexible people break down like mechanical toys because they are unable to respond to serious challenges in creative ways. Refusing to adapt can be dangerous.

... Mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away.



Principle # 10

Real is Flexible

Learning Flexibility

Flexibility is not a choice, but a requirement if we are ever to be *Real*.

Realistic attitudes about change will prepare you to be flexible when you have to adjust.

- **Change does not equal disaster**

Change may be painful, but it won't kill you. Respond constructively.

- **Change is natural**

Without change, we never experience growth and without growth, we wither. The *Real* perspective embraces change.



Principle # 10

Real is Flexible

- **Change does not mean you failed**

Change occurs when an old situation no longer fits. It's not a signal of failure, but rather a spur to improvement.

- **After a big change you won't be your old self**

True, and it's a good thing. Each new experience adds to the complex tapestry of your *Real* self, with a richer, deeper understanding of life's passages.

**“You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any
direction you choose.”**

Dr. Seuss



Principle # 10

Stop and Reflect...

Adopting a new framework of thinking gives us a fresh perspective.

Is there a troubling event or situation in your life? Try to look at it differently. If you “reframe” it, you will find opportunities hidden there.



When the Boy moved the bunny into his bed, the Rabbit was very uncomfortable at first,

“for the Boy hugged him very tight, and sometimes he rolled over on him, and sometimes he pushed him so far under the pillow that the Rabbit could scarcely breathe.”

But the Rabbit is flexible enough to adjust. He comes to appreciate the Boy’s attention and love: *Reframing*.



Principle # 11

Real Love Endures

Weeks passed, and the little Rabbit grew very old and shabby, but the Boy loved him just as much. He loved him so hard that he loved all his whiskers off, and the pink lining to his ears turned grey, and his brown spots faded. He even began to lose his shape, and he scarcely looked like a rabbit anymore, except to the Boy. To him he was always beautiful, and that was all the little Rabbit cared about.



Principle # 11

Real Love Endures

Real Love Works

The Boy's relationship with the Velveteen Rabbit points out universal truths about the way love can work in our lives:

- The Boy's affection was consistent and sincere.
- It brought the Rabbit happiness, a feeling of self-worth and the ability to offer love in return.
- The Velveteen Rabbit comes to accept himself as worthy and lovable, no matter what anyone else may say.
- He is encouraged to develop as a unique individual. Love helped him grow.
- The Boy never asked the Rabbit to be something he was not.



Principle # 11

Real Love Endures

Love portrayed in movies and on TV may leave us feeling inadequate and unattractive. Love cannot conquer all between commercials – it's not reality. Love based on these false images is destined to failure.

To be *Real*, you have to be bravely honest about who you are:

- You are a one-of-a-kind person.
- Love has much less to do with how you look, than *who you are*.
- The most important and most lovable parts of you are invisible.

**“Today you are You,
That is truer than true.
There is no one alive
who is Youer than You.”**

Dr. Seuss



Principle # 11

Real Love Endures

Real Love Grows When...

- we invest ourselves in one another's growth and development
 - we're in the midst of everyday living
 - it doesn't depend on special occasions and grand gestures
 - we embrace the little things as well as the big ones
 - we go out of our way
 - we are generous
 - it invites people to be themselves

“Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be.
The last of life,
for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand”

Rabbi Ben Ezra
Robert Browning , 1864



Principle # 11

Stop and Reflect...

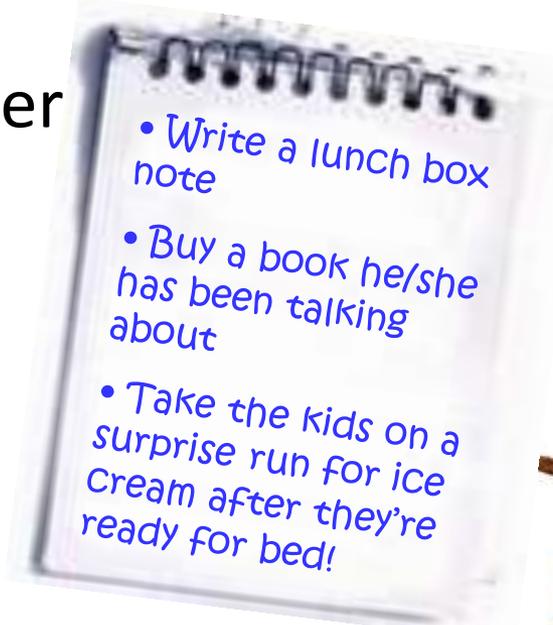
Most of the basic truths about *Real* love are universal to human relationships.

Think of elements that would demonstrate love, even in the most ordinary circumstances.



Does it reflect the other person's interests and who they are as a distinct individual?

**Encouraging words
are a gift of love.**



Principle # 12

Real is Ethical

And so time went on, and the little Rabbit was very happy – so happy that he never noticed his beautiful velveteen fur was getting shabbier and shabbier, and his tail was coming unsewn. And all the pink rubbed off his nose where the Boy had kissed him.



Principle # 12

Real is Ethical

The process of becoming *Real* eventually makes us calmly content with ourselves. We are so comfortable in our worth that we are able to act according to our highest values.

Almost without trying, we become consistently ethical. Ethical behavior involves being conscious of how our actions ripple out to affect others, and then act to minimize harm and maximize the good.

Example: *Picking up a gum or candy bar wrapper and throwing it in the trash, rather than leaving it for others to pick up.*

With inward self-empathy we know how we hope to be treated. We are then called on to transform that empathy outward into our behavior.

BELIEFS → **FEELINGS** → **BEHAVIOR**



Principle # 12

Real is Ethical



self-empathy +
empathy for others =
ethical behavior

Real empathy and honesty will serve as a guide to the most ethical choice in a given situation. Many of the unsettling feelings we experience in our daily lives are actually signals that alert us to choices that violate our internal ethical standards.

Some choices are easy; others are more difficult and have mixed consequences. When given a choice, take the high road.

Real ethics says:

“Do what will allow you to respect yourself tomorrow.”



Principle # 12

Real is Ethical

Ethics in the Workplace

Make use of empathy and person-centered ethics in the workplace. We all want to work where we are respected, where we have opportunities, and where we can demonstrate responsibility.

A boss who is not afraid of being ethical will create this kind of work environment and will treat employees with unwavering fairness.



The result is almost always a loyal workforce that performs more effectively and efficiently.



Principle # 12

Real is Ethical

Real people don't expect agreement everywhere. *Real* embraces differences, even uncomfortable ones.

You don't have to pick a fight or impose what you believe on others. But if you are *Real*, you won't want to betray yourself by hiding or pretending to agree when something important is at stake.

The Road Not Taken

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by, And
that has made all the difference.”

Robert Frost, 1920



Principle # 12

Stop and Reflect...

In Identifying Your *Real* Self...

- ☑ You gain confidence and courage
- ☑ You acquire a broader, more understanding view of all aspects of human nature
- ☑ You will be calmly honest without being argumentative, confrontational, or hurtful



Example: If you find yourself in a group setting where someone insults or jokes about women, men, or a certain race, religion, or ethnic group, say in a calm voice: “You might want to check out your audience. Not everyone here has the same point of view.”

Or, in a one-on-one conversation, you may say, “Please don’t assume I agree with you on this.”



Closing Thoughts

Knowing what gives our lives true value and meaning is the ultimate goal as we mature as *Real*. We all want to feel that we have a purpose and that we matter.

Being *Real* leads you to nurture your own values, interests, and passions and to connect with others in empathetic and positive relationships – at home and at work.

A *Real* life demands your active participation, It just doesn't happen. You design and create it. *Real* doesn't mean you'll be perfect at anything. It means that you're willing to grow and learn through experience. And as a result, you know that you always did your very best.



The Velveteen Principles

About the Author



After working in theater and television, Toni Raiten-D'Antonio returned to school to become a psychotherapist and professor of clinical social work at Empire State College of New York.

She has a thriving private practice on Long Island, where she lives with her husband and two daughters.

Toni considers becoming *Real*, and helping others to do the same, her life's work.

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