

dear residents

The Platinum Rule

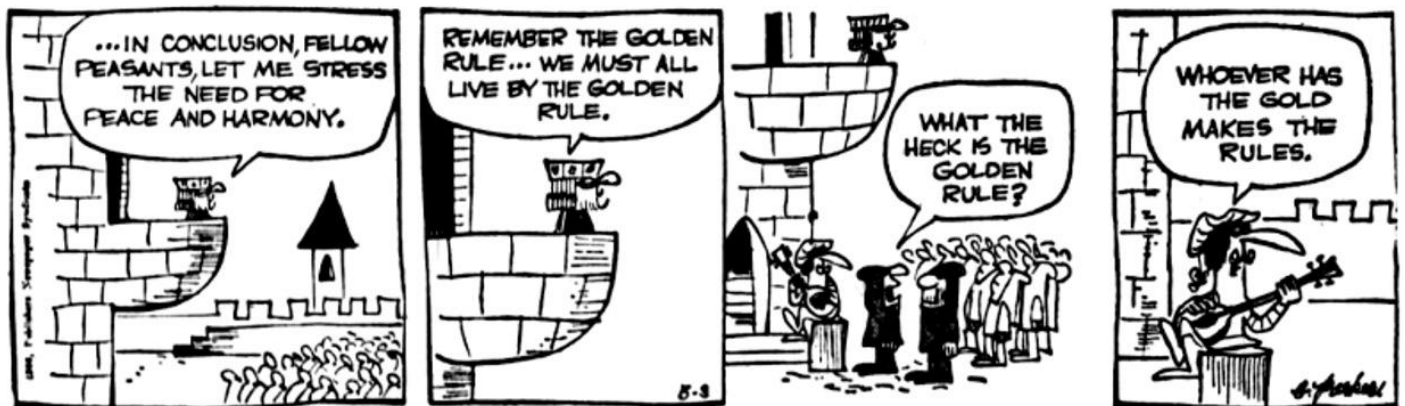
January 29, 2023

Dear Residents,

The Golden Rule – treat others like you would want them to treat you – has had many iterations from ancient civilizations to modern times, formulated with a positive or a negative injunction (do *not* treat others in ways that you would *not* like to be treated). It has the element of reciprocity, of fairness, of justice and of humanism. It has been affirmed by many religious and secular schools of thought. It has been criticized by philosophers (notably Immanuel Kant who wondered how one would know how others want to be treated) and has also been subject to parody. [The Wizard of Id](#) was a comic strip featured in many newspapers (including the one I read growing up in Pakistan) and I recall this one in particular:

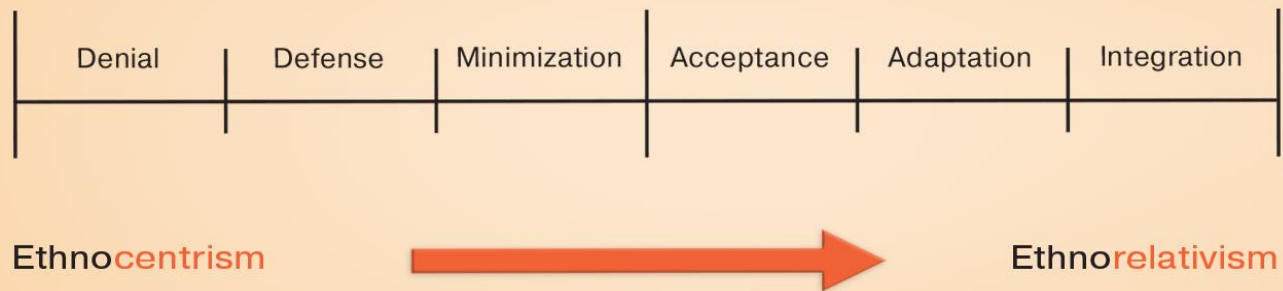
THE WIZARD OF ID

By PARKER AND HART



Versions of the Golden Rule also crop up in our evaluations and reference requests – questions like this one are asked: “would you trust Dr. so and so, to treat members of your own family?” And we may be challenged on our rotations with queries like “what if this was your family member?” When offered choices, our patients may turn to us with “what would you do for yourself, doc?” I can understand why Immanuel Kant and others worried about the Golden Rule – by projecting our preferences on others, we may lose sight of the reality that others may want to be treated differently, often defined by their own cultural preferences. [Developmental models of intercultural sensitivity](#) and [VitalTalk](#) communication constructs have arisen for exactly this reason – to elicit the preferences of others before imposing our partialities on them.

Experience of Difference



[Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity](#)

Enter the Platinum Rule – treat others like *they* would like to be treated. The Golden Rule is ME-centered, while the Platinum Rule is YOU-centered. The point is that it's very pervasive to believe that everyone around you has the same passions and desires as you do. It takes some effort to detach your beliefs from those others hold, engage in truly listening, embracing differences and being mindful that others (especially our patients) many have very different goals and preferences than we do. By developing a diverse work force and by permitting a range of concepts to percolate throughout our organization, we are laying the groundwork for the Platinum Rule to enhance the Golden Rule. Yes, at a minimum do treat others like you would want to be treated, but more importantly make the effort to find out how they would want to be treated.

Perhaps a new version of the reference questionnaire would ask: “would you trust Dr. so and so, to treat patients like *they* would want to be treated.”

Thank you for being intentional and for making others the center of your attention.

Warm regards,

Dino Kazi