

# **Personal Ethical Code of Conduct**

**(Or the principles by which I desire to live my life)**

**Version 1.1.1**

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To all the wonderful people who have demonstrated the power of thinking for themselves and demonstrated their principles through their actions. I wish to also thank my parents who have supported me throughout my life.

This is by far the most important document I have ever personally composed. It is not only a statement of my values, but a statement of the way I wish to live the rest of my life.

Imagine

By, John Lennon

Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace...

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world...

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will live as one

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# Background

In order to understand my ethics you most likely will need to understand a bit about me. This is not intended to be my complete autobiography, which you would likely find rather dull. Instead this is a brief synopsis of my life and I will try not to go into too much detail. The easiest way for me to do this is in a somewhat chronological order. Although life hardly ever follows a linear path, I grow some, fall back to childish tendencies, learn by them and grow some more.

## My Childhood

During my youth I had very few friends, but I had two very important other things: a supportive family, and the wonderful thing called the mind to create, invent, and observe the world around me. Had it not been for those two things, I would not be where I am now. I am completely indebted to my parents. They spent much of their adult life taking care of me and my siblings in fact that is what they still do. I am the oldest of six children. That being the case, I have been the first of the kids to crawl through the muddy waters of the stages of life. My parents amazingly enough put up with my various stages, from the dirty dippers, through the various times I have been sick, and through my emotionally tough times. By doing this they taught me what it means to care for another human being; what love really is.

The second aspect, which I mentioned was my mind. Somehow it became my best friend in a way. I wasn't popular as a result of my willingness to not conform. I didn't have the latest toys and didn't hang out with the coolest of people. I spent many of my recesses during elementary school talking to my teachers or watching the insects crawl and fly around while the other kids displayed just as much random fervor as those insects. That isn't to say I did not have fun, it just seemed I was not having as much fun as everyone else. Yet to me what was more enjoyable than getting bullied or playing games where due to my lack of good motor skills I would lose, was to watch and enjoy through observation the rest of what was happening even without me. To me there is more sometimes to be learned by standing still and contemplating the world around me than trying to play a part that is not me.

## Young Adulthood

I am now passing the stage of being a young adult. This is a rather awkward stage in life and one of very rapid physical, emotional, and mental growth. Looking back on it, I actually had a lot of enjoyable experiences during this time. I became friends with a few people both young and old. I established good relations with both my peers and adults. I

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would be kidding myself to think I didn't want to be accepted by others, I did. At the same time, I tried to never give up my personal identity in order to be part of a group. That does not mean for a moment I would forget about myself and leave my quasi-egotistical world for a moment to share fun and excitement with friends, but it means I kept my basic principles in tact.

My young adulthood was stricken with a few struggles. Now I realize they are nothing in comparison with what others went through during this period, but they still are worth pointing out. The first is the death of two of my most beloved persons in my life, my grandfathers. They in a way demonstrates the two poles in my life. The first was a carpenter by trade and taught through his actions the beauty of nature and how through dedication and love a person can make something beautiful from it. The other was more analytical and enjoyed technology, namely computers, which now take up too large a portion of my life. The second thing that helped change my life was my diabetes. Before I thought I could realize my dream of going to the proverbial deserted island and be one with nature without the hair-pulling difficulties those other people cause. Well, as I quickly discovered, I am completely dependent now on other humans for survival. This of course, as I later realized, is the beauty of community and cooperation, without which I doubt there would be many people on this earth.

## **Religion**

I purposely kept this out of the first two sections of my background, because of its importance and influence in my life. I grew up in a super conservative Christian household. We had no TV, we celebrated Christmas as a family time without Santa Claus and a Christmas tree, and we went to Sunday School every Sunday and Bible Schools in the summer. Another thing that is important to understand is that I did not interact with people of my own religion on a daily basis as the nearest people with our beliefs lived almost 50 miles away and therefore a large portion of my interactions were with those outside of my religion.

During my life I learned more and more about religion by observing those in my religion and those outside of it. What I found was every person's religion was in fact different, despite the similarities. There are so many arguments and points of contention even among those in a religious group it is phenomenal. The issues include both moral issues, such as divorce and remarriage, and doctrinal issues such as the nature and purpose of Jesus.

Today, I am agnostic and a free thinker.[3][5] There are those who do an excellent job of holding the highest of morals within a religion, despite what the doctrines of that religion really suggest. They are usually people who daily sacrifice themselves to please their deity and serve their family and friends. In doing so these people often find that their own salvation according to their religion is in jeopardy, because they care more sometimes about those they love more than they care about deity. Although I hold the highest of respects for these people, it no longer made any sense to find myself among this group. In my ethical statement below, there are places where my ethics disagree with the principles of my previous religion. They are also in conflict with some principles in the Bible. I will not go into detail how religion is misused and abused the Bible or how the works of others is abused for promoting selfish ideals, but they exist at an extreme rate that I find appalling, especially among those who consider themselves extremely moral.

## **Today**

That brings me to the present, as I set now and lay out my ethical policy. I am now 22 years old and about to graduate from college with a degree in Computer Engineering. I spend almost all of my spare time thinking and reading. I now purposely read things that are largely censored in our society. I also read things that everyone claims knowledge of, but no one completely understands, like the Bible. Mostly, I enjoy reading comments online by people like myself that enjoy thinking about the problems in society and not only propose solutions, but practice those solutions.

In the past I have been very closed minded about a lot of things, religion being a big one. I thought I was so right and that what I was taught was on completely solid ground and could not be disputed. Now I realize how wrong I was and understand the dangers and consequences of being so devote to a single idea. For if people were more open, I do not think we would have so many bloody wars, which now are more over ideologies than they are over natural resources. I have found that it is far better to share your ideas openly and listen to those of others than to sit defiantly and defensively ignoring the ideas of others. Religion for me was a great teacher, but unfortunately with it came a huge load of guilt, a feeling of sinfulness, and inability to be loyal to my own ideas and thoughts. Now I do not subscribe to a belief structure. It is my desire to take things as they are and then work with them in order to create something better. I cannot know things for sure that exist outside my own experiences. I do, however, believe in a human spirit (natural not supernatural). It is that spirit that now drives me, a spirit of nature that builds a strong desire to make the world a better place for myself and others. It is this spirit and this yearning, which is the basis of this ethical policy.

# Introduction

I have split this ethical policy into two parts. The first is my personal ethical policy and the second my professional ethical policy. There really is not much, but a superficial boundary between the two, but I would rather keep them separate. The most important thing in this policy is its hierarchy. If there is any conflict between two or more items in this statement I will try my hardest to put the higher level items above the lower order ones. Also after each statement will follow a brief paragraph explaining my meaning of each. This is a personal code of ethics and in no way do I expect anyone other than myself to follow it. This is a very important distinction, because most policies are held by a community whether it be secular laws or religious morals.

Of course as Lao Tzu said, "Losing the way of life, men rely on goodness, losing goodness, they rely on laws." These principles are meant to describe my way of life and the goodness I wish to demonstrate and if all else fails I will have them to guide me back in the right direction.

# **1 Personal Ethical Policy**

## **1.1 To not purposely cause harm to any other human being.**

This means, among other things, that I will not fight in any war. It does not matter what ideals are being protected, even my worst enemies even a person who attempts or does take my life is not to be killed. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, is not part of my ethics. I have from my childhood onwards been very passive. Aggression, when I have demonstrated it, has only brought forth poor results. The way to resolve issues is through knowledge, good communication, and brotherly love. I cannot take the life or freedoms of another to protect my own or promote my ideals. That brings me to my next statement.

## **1.2 To promote and demonstrate my ideals through my actions not through enforcing them on others.**

One of the things that has always upset me about religions is the level of hypocrisy. I should give credit to Jesus for pointing out this obvious part of too many people who profess themselves as religious (Matt. 23:13-15, etc.) and try to enforce ideals they themselves do not follow. As I am only enforcing these ideals on myself, I cannot in keeping with the first statement harm others in my hypocrisy. The result of me breaking my own ethics will be damaging more to me than anyone else.

## **1.3 To respect the ideas, lifestyles, religions, and ideals of others. Unless they are in conflict with 1.1 or 1.2, then I will not respect them, but I will not break 1.1 or 1.2 in order to change them.**

One of the greatest problems that still exists is stereotyping. I used to have unfavorable opinions of those who are gay, Catholics, or Atheists. I was taught through words, and fortunately not through action, that such groups were evil. They consisted of the “World” or essentially anyone outside my religious group. I am glad at this time that I was a hypocrite in not following through with these principles. To me each person is just that—a person. I give no more respect for presidents, kings, CEOs, or religious leaders as I have for the bum on the street. The only reason why I treat

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the previous four with apparently more reverence is because of fear. It is through fear that many people and groups stand taller than others.

To respect others means to not make them fear me in order to instill my ideals on them and to recognize our shared human condition. I understand the importance of rules and regulations for an orderly society, but I do not think that I should be the one who alone defines these rules (see 1.12).

### **1.4 To abide by the rules, codes of conduct, and laws of the community around me as long as they are not in conflict with my higher principles.**

A large part of respect is doing things in acceptance with those around me. It would be rude and disrespectful to do otherwise. Please note that I kept government out of the above statement and instead replaced it with community.[4] Laws today have become too complex and often impractical to follow all of them. Governments, unfortunately in my opinion, fight a never ending battle to appease both the people and the many lobbyists that try to do things that are in opposition of what is desirable by the people or healthy for society. I therefore, side with the people over any lobby group that is trying to pass a bill that is in opposition to what the people want. Too many of my rights have been unnecessarily taken from individuals by groups that I feel I should have.

I would prefer that governments would become increasingly democratic to the point where each person has equal say in the state of affairs of the country. This is often deemed unsafe, but in practice I think once people realize what this means they will be for it not against it. Having a select few make the decisions for others in making less and less sense as the world shrinks through new technologies and greater education. Until that happens, I will not vote for people to make decisions for me, but instead share my opinions, but more importantly in accordance with section 1.2 live them.

### **1.5 To be honest and trustworthy, and to disclose my feelings.**

One of the main principles that allows a society to work efficiently and without violence is honesty. Hiding information by lying often causes more harm than good. I will also make good my promises to others and make sure that my words are followed by action. This includes giving full disclosure of events rather than obscuring facts in a way that has harmed humanity for ages.

This also includes times when someone chooses for me to act on their behalf. I must first make sure that what they request is not in opposition to my ethics and then if I chose to accept that responsibility make sure I follow through according to their intent. Good communication is necessary for this to happen.

Included in this statement, is also the need to be honest when there is something I disagree with. Too often problems occur by hiding feeling in order to preserve temporary peace.

## **1.6 To respect the property of others as long as we have the concept of property.**

An important moral value is that of not stealing. That means not only stealing from others, but from nature and the commons. We live in a consumption crazed society. I have too often been caught up in the desire to consume, that through my consumption I have in essence promoted companies to take the lives of others and put them in sweat shops to produce for me. This is a fairly negative way of looking at things, but it is the sad state of affairs today.

Eventually, I would like to see the concept of property end. I have been told all my life that it is good to share. I think it is part of the human spirit to share, from downright natural things like sexual experiences, to the more abstract like thoughts and ideas. Today we like to capitalize on all of these things, we have a huge sex market and an intellectual property market. We have established that each is good for the economy. I get this from looking at the movie industry and the software industry. Each spends millions of dollars and so much wasted time in making sure that nothing gets shared without making a lot of money. Fortunately things like Open Source and forums to share works of art do exist. I would like to see this ideology spread. With more respect for what is shared, rather than hoarding what I “own,” I feel that I can live at greater peace with my neighbors and global community. At the same time, I must respect what others own and hopefully through sharing as much as I can through volunteerism, donations, and community service I will encourage others to see the power in this mode of thinking.

## **1.7 To promote through self-education, observation, reading, conversation, and writing the sciences or the understanding of the world around me. And to use this understanding to the benefit of myself and others through both action and sharing of knowledge.**

Human progress comes through understanding not ignorance. I will only do more damage in trying to change that which I do not understand. I can have all the love, compassion, and desire in the world and still do more harm than good. It is the coupling of knowledge, gained through experience, education, communication, and observation, with self-respect and love of others that will enable me to make positive contributions to society. These two cannot and should not be separated. It could be argued that anyone who loves someone else would be willing to put their life on the line for someone else, but common sense and knowledge also need to be observed.

## **1.8 To give proper credit to others.**

When someone does something for me or for a group, I should not take credit for their work. Also if I get an idea from a source, I should reference it. This statement comes from the “ACM Code of Ethics.”[1]

## **1.9 To honor confidentiality.**

In helping others there may be cases where they may confess certain actions or share private information with me. When they share such information, I should not spread this information. The only case where I may share this information is if I find that keeping it confidential is in violation of my higher principles. If someone described to me how they were going to kill someone else, I would report such a threat. I value the ability to share personal information with others in good faith that they will not share it with others, I can only be expected to do the same.

## **1.10 To promote a higher quality of life for myself and others.**

Probably one of the key desires of a human being is the betterment of their current situation. For some this drives them insane to the point where this encompasses their whole being. In doing so they diminish the lives of others through a pursuit to increase the quality of their own lives. To me it is naive to believe that I really want to promote the increase in the quality of the life of others before myself. That does not mean that I should not put constraints upon my desires. It also does not mean I should not care about the quality of life of others. I have observed that by promoting and working hard at increasing the quality of life of those around me, my quality of life increases. It is too easy to give a bad name to these self-promoting actions of aiding others. In religious circles it is called pride and in others it is called selfish giving. To me it is probably the only way we progress as a society. It is through shared cooperation and a willingness to increase our quality of lives that we also desire to do the same for others. It is a very natural desire that allows our species to survive and this is part of what I described earlier as the human spirit.

In this category also belongs things such as the arts, which is the human spirit set free through paintings, music, acting, programming, gardening, or any other activity that promotes a love of the natural and humane. I think it a shame that we wish to put price tags on sharing this spirit, but that is the state of society as it now exists.

## **1.11 To live a healthy lifestyle and do things that will aid others in healthy living.**

Through exercise, good eating habits, and general good self-care, I can ease the burdens of my life and others. I should strive towards helping others live healthy as well in order to both ease the burden they may cause me as well as their own burdens. This includes things such as promoting health facilities, open space, parks, hiking trails, and other public places of recreation. It also means eating right and not partaking in activities that could lead to diseases and other health problems.

## **1.12 To not have others fear me.**

Fear is the key to perpetuating hatred. Therefore, I add this as my last personal ethical principle. Fear is capitalized by governments, religions, and individuals to get others to do what they want. People, including myself, end up unhappy

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with this state of fear. It often leads to rebellion and war. For this reason I am opposed to creating weapons and armies. There are much better ways to promote conformance, the best of which I found is to work together with whatever social group that surrounds me and agree through compromise and cooperation what rules should be established. It would be a great error to assume that others have the same morals as I do and that I should promote those morals with fear in order to benefit the lives of those around me.

## **2 Professional Code of Ethics**

For the most part this code of ethics relates to my career in the computer and technology field. This code of ethics has been in part been adopted from the “ACM Code of Ethics[1]” and the “IEEE Code of Professional Ethics.[2]” I will referenced them in parentheses, wherever I borrowed something from them. Also it is important to note that my personal code of ethics comes before my professional code of ethics. Therefore, I will chose to violate my professional code of ethics, in favor of my personal code of ethics should a conflict arise.

### **2.1 Strive to achieve the highest quality, effectiveness and dignity in both the process and products of professional work.**

(ACM 2.1) This statement has been taken directly from the ACM Code of Ethics. The quality of my work speaks for both my credibility as well as can have a huge impact on society. Through my professional work, I understand that the systems I create may mean the difference between life and death for others. I should work hard to reduce any errors in my work. I should also be willing to share my work with others in order for them to look for errors, before making my works available to the public or a client (see 2.4).

### **2.2 To maintain a high level of competence and knowledge in my field.**

(ACM 2.2) It is important that my skills are up to par so that I can produce in a way that is both efficient and reliable. This is also important so that what I produce is inter-operable with other current systems.

### **2.3 To know and respect laws pertaining to professional work.**

(ACM 2.3) I should obey existing local, state, province, national, and international laws pertaining to my work unless there is a compelling ethical basis not to do so. Policies and procedures of the organization in which I participate should also be obeyed. But compliance must be balanced with the recognition that sometimes existing laws and rules may be immoral or inappropriate and, therefore, must be challenged.

Violation of a law or regulation may be ethical when that law or rule has inadequate moral basis or when it conflicts with another law judged to be more important. If I decide to violate law or rule because it is viewed as unethical, or for any other reason, I will accept responsibility for my actions and for the consequences.

## **2.4 Accept and provide appropriate professional review.**

(ACM 2.4) Quality professional work, especially in the computing profession, depends on professional reviewing and critiquing. Whenever appropriate, I should seek and utilize peer review as well as provide critical review of the work of others.

## **2.5 Improve public understanding of computing and its consequences.**

(ACM 2.7) I have placed this at a higher level of importance than what appears in the ACM Code of Ethics, because public misunderstanding of computing can cause more harm than my private misunderstanding. I have the responsibility to share my knowledge of computers with the public by encouraging them to learn about computers, the potential impacts of computers systems, and their limitations.

## **2.6 Honor contracts, agreements, and assignments.**

Both the success of my career and the keeping of my personal ethics requires that I do this. Imperative in this is that I also do everything possible to not accept a contract, agreement, assignment that I see as being in conflict with any higher level of ethics. In doing so it could have adverse effects on my life, my ability to perform well while doing the project, and cause future regret.

(ACM 2.6) Honoring my commitments is a matter of integrity and honesty. It includes ensuring that system elements perform as intended. Also, when my work is for another party, I have an obligation to keep that party properly informed about progress toward completing that work.

I also have a responsibility to request a change in any assignment that cannot be completed as defined. Only after serious consideration and with full disclosure of risks and concerns to the employer or client, should I accept the assignment. The major underlying principle here is the obligation to accept personal accountability for professional work. On some occasions other ethical principles may take the greater priority.

## **2.7 Give comprehensive and thorough evaluations of computer systems and their impacts, including analysis of possible risks.**

(ACM 2.5) I must strive to be perceptive, thorough, and objective when evaluating, recommending, and presenting system descriptions and alternatives. I may often find myself in a position of special trust and therefore have a special responsibility to provide object, credible evaluations to employers, clients, users, and the public. When providing evaluations I must also identify any relevant conflicts of interest, as stated in imperative 1.3.

As noted in the discussion of principle 1.1 on avoiding harm, any signs of danger from systems must be reported to those who have opportunity and/or responsibility to resolve them.

## **2.8 I should access computing and communication resources only when authorized to do so.**

(ACM 2.8) Theft or destruction of tangible and electronic property is prohibited by principles 1.1, 1.4, and 1.6. This includes trustpassing, which is accessing communication networks and computer systems, or accounts and/or files associated with those systems, without explicit authorization to do so. Individuals and organizations have the right to restrict access to their systems so long as they do not violate the discrimination principle (see 1.3).

I should not enter or use another's computing system, software, or data files without permission. I must always have appropriate approval before using system resources, including .rm57 communication prots, file space, other system peripherals, and computer time.

## **2.9 To reject bribery in all its forms.**

(IEEE 4.) In order to make ethical and technically sound decisions I must reject outside influences such as large sums of money or extravagant gifts.

## **2.10 To disclose any conflicts of interest.**

(IEEE 2.) If for some reason two contracts become mutually exclusive on a certain point or if I have an external reason to not perform well on a particular project, I need to disclose them as a conflict of interest. I then will work with both parties in resolving this conflict. See also 1.5 and 2.6.

## **2.11 When given the responsibility for a group, I should promote good principles among the group.**

If I ever find myself in a position of leadership for a particular project or group, which ideally I would not since I prefer a cooperative approach, I should maintain the above professional principles within this group. This includes pointing out violations and making sure I set a good example for the rest of the group.

## **3 Compliance with this Ethical Code of Conduct**

### **3.1 Uphold and promotion of the principles of this code.**

I should uphold and promote these principles throughout both my personal life and my professional career, including my volunteer efforts and public service by living according to them.

### **3.2 Violations of this code.**

I have made this Ethical Code of Conduct public in order for others to help me when I err from the principles herein contained. I encourage people to point out my mistakes and non-compliance with the above statements. Living an ethical and moral life is both a function of my personal ideals and those around me aiding me in maintaining those ideals.

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