

Are We All Ignoring the Golden Rule?

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In Michael Shermer's book *The Science of Good & Evil*, he discusses the "Golden Rule."¹ The concept that one should treat others as one wishes to be treated is chronicled starting with *Leviticus 19:18* ("love thy neighbor as thyself") and then on to various other religions and philosophers. It has been stated in the negative - Confucius: "What you do not want others to do to you, do not do to others" or in the positive - Peter Kropotkin: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you in like case." While universal enough to be known simply as the Golden Rule, how often do we live up to this ideal?

The Tormented Becomes the Tormentor

The motivational speaker Zig Ziglar tells a story about how our bad attitude has far-reaching effects. In the story, a big shot has a bad day and proceeds to yell at his assistant, who yells at another person on down the line until the last person in the chain yells at their child. Having no person below them to yell at, the child proceeds to kick the cat.

Instead of following the Golden Rule, we often practice kicking the cat. It's not uncommon for our patients to come to us having a bad day for any number of reasons - an obvious one being the musculoskeletal pain that brought them to our office in the first place. Hopefully, as compassionate health care providers we don't react to the patient's poor attitude and treat them poorly. However, as a result of one or even a few patients who don't treat us well, we might kick the cat, with the cat in this case being our staff. Before you kick the cat, your staff or your family, think twice; is this following the Golden Rule?

Hazing is a variation on kicking the cat. Hazing happens in various groups, but is most often associated with fraternities/sororities and athletic teams. Often the worse perpetrators of hazing are those who only a year before were the victims. There is a sort of "they got me so now I can get someone else" mentality; this is a delayed form of kicking the cat. Ask any victim of hazing and they will tell you that they did not like it. If they exercised the Golden Rule the next year, rather than being the great tormentor, they would demure and even suggest that hazing isn't the best route to bringing someone new into the group.

Chiropractic Cat-Kicking

Think about [the new doctor](#) who was treated poorly as an associate. One might think they would treat their associates better than they were, but that often doesn't seem to be the case. Some of my former students tell me horror stories about how their bosses treated them. I remind them that if they didn't like that treatment, make sure that when they hire associates, they treat them well.

One of my instructors in chiropractic college used to talk about how some graduates from a certain chiropractic college had made it impossible for him to get a license in a certain state. In response to this, he worked diligently to prevent doctors who had graduated from that college from getting a license in his state.

Until our victory in the *Wilk v AMA* case, our profession endured years of being victims of political medicine's attacks. We know that they attacked us in every way they could to destroy our credibility as a profession, with the ultimate goal of destroying our profession as a whole. They claimed we weren't adequately trained and would harm the public, etc. No one who lived through this period will forget it. I remember an MD dropping my hand in the middle of a handshake, spinning around on his heels and walking away from me without uttering a single word upon learning that I was a DC.

One might think that, having been tormented as we were by the medical profession for so many years, we would have compassion for others so tormented. Clearly we do not. In the U.S. it seems that most state chiropractic associations have viewed the expansion of scope of practice of [physical therapists](#) as a threat to us, akin to the threat medicine views us as. We have used the very same form of arguments that the AMA used against us. We've claimed that physical therapists have inferior training to do manipulation and will harm the public.

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey talks about striving for the win-win. It appears to me that battling the physical therapists has not been a win for us nor for them and suffers from not applying the Golden Rule. We have been kicking the physical therapy cat. I think both professions would be better served by our joining with them in preventing the AMA's attempts to restrict both our scopes of practice and that of other "non-physicians."

Will Anyone Learn?

Nevertheless, some physical therapists have decided to use what power they have to attack our profession in a tit-for-tat strategy. For example, physical therapists David Butler and Brian Mulligan won't allow DCs to take their courses, and some PTs in the U.S. military are trying to restrict the practices of [DCs in the military](#).

One might ask, "Have physical therapists learned the Golden Rule from their torment?" No they have not, as they have tried to kick the athletic trainer cat, trying to restrict their scope of practice. PTs have tried to prevent athletic trainers from practicing in sports medicine clinics and other venues, claiming they were inadequately trained. In February 2009, the National Athletic Trainers Association sued the American Physical Therapy Association. Finally, last September the NATA and APTA [reached an out-of-court settlement](#).²

Maybe all of us can do unto others as we would have others do unto us, rather than doing unto others as others have done unto us. Isn't it time to stop kicking other profession's cats and for the various health professions to work together?

References

1. Shermer M. *The Science of Good & Evil: Why People Cheat, Gossip, Care, Share, and Follow the Golden Rule*. New York: Times Books; 2004:24-5.
2. "[NATA and APTA Reach Settlement](#)." APTA.org.

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