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THE 'GOLDEN' AND 'PLATINUM' RULES

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How should we treat others? Perhaps the most common answer to this question, found in ‘virtually every organized society and in every religious doctrine,’ is that you should, ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ (Corning, 2011, p. 5). That is, an ethical relationship with another is one in which we treat that other with the same standards as we would want for ourselves. This moral precept, known as the *Golden Rule*, has been equated with the principle of fairness (Corning, 2011), and still forms the basis for the modern concept of human rights (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Rule#Human_rights). If we are working with a client, then, this means we should be asking ourselves, ‘How would I want to be treated if I were sitting in the client’s chair?’ That is, ‘What kind of stance would I want my therapist to take towards me?’ Here, we are not asking about the particular therapeutic techniques we might want, but about the fundamental way in which our therapist relates to, and views, us, as a person.

In recent years, a *Platinum Rule* has also been articulated, which might be considered a step forward from the Golden Rule. This states simply ‘Treat others the way they want to be treated’ (<http://www.alessandra.com/abouttony/aboutpr.asp>). That is, ‘Do unto others as they want you to do unto them.’ This is, perhaps, more consistent with Levinas’s (1969) philosophy, which moves away from an ethics of reciprocity towards a prioritising of the Other: ‘the stranger, the widow, the orphan, to whom I am obligated’ (p. 215). With Mei, then, this means putting our focus onto finding out what she, specifically, wants. For instance, does she want us to be gentle and sensitive in the work, or does she want us to be challenging and confrontational? Such an ethical starting point is highly consistent with the development of a personalised, pluralistic approach to therapy (Cooper & Dryden, 2016; Cooper & McLeod, 2007, 2011).

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