

Code of Ethics of the Family



WANGO

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Preface

The family is the core unit of society. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, enacted without dissent by the United Nations in 1948, notes this in stating that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” If society were to be compared to an organism, families would be the cells. It is in the state’s interest to protect the family because, as the cornerstone of society, healthy families lead to a healthy society, analogous to healthy cells being necessary for a healthy organism.

Essentially, the family is the training ground of the heart and a textbook in which the husband and wife are joint authors. It is in the family where we learn to care for others beyond ourselves, to sacrifice ourselves for others, to love others. The most natural environment for a child to grow mentally and spiritually from a state of selfishness and selfish behavior to unselfishness is the family setting. The family is the school of love and where children cultivate heart and build character, learning virtue, norms, and manners.

Likewise, marriage traditionally has been a revered institution, universal to the human experience. The essential necessity and central role of marriage has long been recognized and uplifted throughout recorded human history and by all cultures and all major religions. Marriage is the foundation of social order and recognized economically, legally, spiritually, and socially as the primary social institution for raising children. The institution deserves sacrifices to endure and preserve the family; divorce should not be an easy exit from daily troubles.

Harmonious and successful families are built on moral and spiritual foundations and share common features. This code of ethics and standards of good conduct of the family systematically identifies some of the key universal standards and ethical practices recognized by harmonious families and is designed to be broadly applicable to families worldwide. It assumes the traditional model of the family, seen throughout history, involving a husband and wife, father and mother, and children.

Stresses of urbanization and modernity have placed strains on the family and on marriage. This Code is designed to provide a frame of reference of those common features that help make successful families.

Developed under the auspices of the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO), in partnership with many organizations, the Code of Ethics of the Family was formulated by an international committee representing the broad spectrum of societies from all regions of the world. The original founding vision was provided by H.E. Dr. Abdelaziz Hegazy, former Prime Minister of Egypt, and the Pennsylvania Family Coalition was the original founding partner providing practical assistance with the development of the Code.

The adoption of a suitable code provides an ethical framework for families. It is hoped that individual families will discuss this code with their family members and either adopt it as it is or modify it to make a code individualized for their particular family.

I. General Principles

Every family operates on the basis of fundamental principles, whether plainly stated or implicitly understood. Further, an examination of families that are harmonious, successful, and generally respected by their communities reveals a great commonality in these principles. In other words, to a great extent, harmonious families from throughout the world tend to share the same fundamental assumptions or beliefs that make their achievement possible. The following is an articulation of the more important of these shared fundamental principles.

A. Love

The fundamental essence of the family, and indeed the universe, is love or “heart.” Love is the strongest force in the world and it is said that all united actions center on love. However, love is more than a feeling or emotion felt by an individual; it is an active force that is unconditionally given by one being to another and impacts on the receiver. It is a deed, word or even thought of unqualified goodness, and actual energy that must be given.

B. Giving and receiving

Giving and receiving keeps the circulation of love and good flowing richly in the family. Giving is an ethic and discipline, which must be cultivated and practiced. To have the greatest impact, it is desirable that one give freely, unconditionally, and joyfully, rather than reluctantly, with strings attached, or with selfish desire. Giving is best when done without expectation of getting something in return – even secretly or anonymously -- from the position of unselfish love. The ability to receive is equally important and should be done with a heart of gratitude and appreciation.

C. Greater purpose

There is a pattern of relationships that bind parents and children, as well as families with society. Each entity in the universe advances both a function for itself (survival, growth, etc.) and a function for the larger entity of which it is part. Just as a body suffers should a cell not fulfill its greater purpose, the family suffers when individuals live only for themselves and communities suffer when families do not care about other families and the community. Thus, the natural conduit for the prosperity and joy for

an individual in a family and the family in society is to live for a greater purpose. On the other hand, a root cause of disharmony in the family is selfishness, striving to be served rather than serving others.

D. Thoughts, words, and deeds

Actions—thoughts, words, and deeds—have consequences for the doer and receiver and need to be carefully considered. Actions should be ethical and inclusive taking into account the consequences for the family as a whole. Families suffer when individuals pursue actions for immediate pleasure or addictions rather than applying discipline for long-term health and happiness.

E. Present reality, future potential

As spouses relate with spouses, parents with children, and siblings with each other, one needs to remember that each person is a work in progress. It is important to see individuals, including oneself, not only as we are in this moment in time, but also in terms of our potential. Such a viewpoint can help the family be a safe and supportive unit for each member.

II. Relationship Between Spouses

Harmony in the relationship between husband and wife is basic for happiness of the individuals and of the children. Such conjugal love survives and thrives through the discipline of married life. Marriage is a dwelling place of comfort, security, and compassion.

A. Core principles

1. *Fidelity.* Faithfulness is the core assumption and foundation of marriage. We expect ourselves to be faithful and our spouses to be faithful. Both spouses are to be mutually respectful and regularly renew their commitment to each other in their marriage relationship.
2. *Living for sake of the other.* Maintaining the attitude of living for the sake of the other will naturally cultivate love and help to negotiate the different stages of the marriage. Each partner should enter the marriage thinking of what he or she can give to the other, rather than computing what he or she will get out of it. They are to maintain this attitude of living for the sake of the other throughout the marriage.
3. *Forgiveness and reconciliation.* Forgiving is as essential in marriage as giving. While it is inevitable there will be disagreements, the goal of each partner should be to reconcile.

B. Responsibilities

1. *Different roles, equal value.* Husbands and wives may have different responsibilities and roles in the family and society, but their love makes them equal in value and worth.

2. *Joy of having children.* A natural outgrowth of the love of a husband and wife is the joy of having children. A healthy marriage provides the most secure environment for raising children and the opportunity for developing the parental heart. A couple has the responsibility to educate themselves about all aspects of raising children. In return for the joy children generate, they have the right to pedagogical adequate informed parents.

3. *Honor and cherish.* The husband and wife should honor and cherish each other. It is important for both spouses to invest in a relationship to keep the marriage alive and for the continual development of the marriage.

III. Relationship between Parents and Children

Responsibility of the Parents

Parental love is typically the most unselfish emotion, as most parents are willing to sacrifice their very lives for their children. Having children is a life-altering experience and one that typically expands one's sense of compassion and awareness of other children. Parents are responsible to educate themselves to be good parents. Proactively before becoming a parent, individuals should realize what is needed to be a good parent; parenthood is not an internship.

A. Nurture

1. *Provide love.* A parent is to provide a safe and nurturing environment, where the children can experience love. Such love is necessary for the proper growth of the child and so that the child can learn to love others.
2. *Provide material well-being.* A parent is to provide for the children's material well-being, including proper nutrition and shelter, as well as is possible.
3. *Protect from harm.* A parent is responsible to protect children from physical harm and abuse.
4. *Stable environment.* When parents fight in front of their children or contemplate or discuss divorce, it creates an environment of anxiety and insecurity for the child. An atmosphere of love, happiness, and understanding is important for the healthy development of children and their own current and future relationships.

B. Educate

1. *Educating children in the basic matters of life.* A parent is responsible to educate children in the basic matters of life, both heart and norm, and including moral instruction and manners.
2. *Discipline.* In concern for proper growth, a parent is responsible to discipline children. Such discipline is to be done out of love, not anger or loss of temper. Discipline takes into account the dignity of the child.
3. *Set an example.* Children learn from the example of their parents and how parents relate to their spouse, children, others, and the environment. Parents should educate children to love more than their family, but others in society as well.
4. *Prepare for marriage.* Parents have a responsibility to help their children develop healthy relationship skills for marriage preparation with a suitable life partner.

Responsibility of the Children

Children can be a great source of joy to their parents, as well as to the communities, societies, and nations. However, without proper education, children can grow up to self-centered and a detriment to their communities, families, and themselves. While every human being starts out selfish as a baby, a sign of increasing maturity is to recognize the needs of others. Filial piety is the age-old moral principle that children show respect and honor to their parents. Ideally, it not matter of duty but spontaneous and natural prompting of a grateful heart.

C. Personal growth

1. *Responsibility to grow in character.* Each child has his or her own responsibility to grow and improve his or her own character.
2. *Responsibility to develop physical health.* Each child is to develop and maintain their physical body through exercise, good diet, and good hygiene,
3. *Responsibility to develop spiritual health.* Each child is to develop and maintain spiritual health by choosing friends of good character, serving as a good example for all acquaintances, and avoiding self-destructive behaviors such as consumption of alcohol and drugs, pre-marital sex, and acts of violence.
4. *Responsibility to develop capabilities.* Each child is to develop their abilities (intellectually, practically) to make a meaningful contribution to others and the world.

D. Filial piety

1. *Respect and honor to parents.* By respecting, honoring, and serving one's parents, the child is able to inherit the love, wisdom, knowledge, and fortune of the parents.
2. *Appreciate parent's sacrifices.* A child shows greater maturity and demonstrates greater love for the parents when he or she understands and appreciates a parent's sacrifices for them. Each child should grow to sympathize with parent's difficulties and sufferings and be of support to them.
3. *Humility before parents.* When a child recognizes the parent wants what is best for the child, he or she will seek the parent's guidance and follow the direction of the parent.
4. *Care for parents in old age.* A child has the responsibility to care for their elder parents and serve them as the parents served the child when the child was young, giving back the unconditional love the parents gave to the child.

VI. Relationship Between Siblings

Peace in the family is tied to love and harmony among siblings. Parental love helps to guide sibling relations and reduce sibling rivalry. However, siblings also have their own responsibilities. As siblings learn to care for each other, they learn to care for those in the world, their brothers and sisters in a wider sense.

A. Core principles

1. *Living for sake of the other.* When siblings learn to serve each other, giving priority to important needs of their brothers and sisters, they develop the quality of maturity and unselfishness that will serve them well when they become adults. They should learn to give and forget, unconditionally helping each other without expectation of return.
2. *Forgiveness and reconciliation.* Siblings should be willing to forgive and forget.
3. *Parental point of view.* By seeing one's sibling from the perspective of their parents, harmony and love can blossom in the family. Furthermore, as a brother learns to love his sister, he prepares himself to love his future wife, and as a sister learns to love her brother, she prepares herself to love her future husband.
4. *Belongingness, togetherness.* Siblings should behave in a way towards each other and their parents that helps create a warm family culture of belongingness through tight knit positive relationships.

B. Responsibilities

1. *Setting an example.* Just as parents are to set an example for their children, older siblings should set an example for their younger siblings. In fact, all siblings should be an example for each other.
2. *Learning to care.* Each sibling should study each brother and sister to learn their nature and how best to harmonize with them and care for them.

V. Family and Society

Living for others is the basic rule of the world. The family likewise does not exist only for itself. As with other entities, the family is part of a larger whole and makes its own unique contribution for its community, society, and nation. The contribution of the family to society is not a one way thing. It can only be effective if the society in return has structures, norms and values in place to acknowledge the family's contribution and to challenge the family to keep contributing.

A. Living for others

1. *Living for sake of the other.* The family should care for its neighbors and serve its community, society, and nation, providing a larger value for these entities.
2. *Perspective.* The family should treat all people of the world as brothers and sisters. When human dignity is absent in a given society, it is the moral obligation of the family to convince society that such is needed.