

Handout

Ten Commitments of Humanism: Responsibility, Ethical Development, Critical Thinking

1. **Introduction:** “This life, in this world, is our central defining focus. Each one of us is responsible for the collective welfare of humanity, other beings, and the resources of our shared planet. We value freedom, reason, and tolerance . . . The Ten Commitments represent our shared humanistic values and principles that promote a democratic world in which every individual’s worth and dignity is respected, nurtured, and supported, and where human freedom and ethical responsibility are natural aspirations for everyone.”

2. **Responsibility:** “I will be a good person—even when no one is looking—and own the consequences of my actions.”

“Every day, each of us makes choices. These choices, large and small, all have consequences—for ourselves and for the world around us. Moral responsibility involves taking conscious ownership of one’s intentions and actions, and being accountable for the resulting consequences. Although we all live in a society with various cultural values, expectations, codes of conduct, and social mores, ultimately we all decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. Being a responsible person involves steadfast attention to what is right and willfully bearing the blame or praise for our own actions.”

3. **Ethical Development:** “I will always focus on becoming a better person.”

“The key to understanding ethical development is acknowledging that nobody is perfect or has all the answers. Ethical development is a never-ending process that requires constant reflection and evaluation of our personal choices and the consequences they have on others. Fairness, cooperation, and sharing are among the first moral issues we encounter in our ethical development as human beings and are often embraced intuitively, but each new day carries with it new challenges and new moral dilemmas. We should continually adapt and rebuild our moral frameworks with the goal of becoming ever better human beings.”

4. **Minimum Statement of Humanism by the International Humanist and Ethical Union**

“Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.”

General Assembly of the IHEU (1996)