

Eight Personal and Social Responsibilities in a Diverse Nation and Shrinking Globe:

1) Categorize without distorting.

Categories help our minds understand the world and society. But be mindful of who you are putting into categories and how you categorize people so as not to distort your view of the world.

2) Generalize without stereotyping.

While groups of people often share characteristics or interests, not every person in that group necessarily shares all characteristics associated with that group—positive or negative.

3) Label without demeaning.

Labeling helps us navigate a complex and complicated society; however, labeling should not be demeaning or derogatory.

4) Live with your biases without discriminating.

Acknowledging that we all have biases can help us transcend discrimination and examine our actions more closely. It is unlikely that we will ever be free of bias, but knowing how to work around your bias will lead to more socially responsible actions and opinions.

5) Treat people equitably, even if this sometimes means not treating them equally.

Not everyone has equal means or opportunities in this world. So treating people equally isn't always just. Sometimes being equitable is more important than everyone getting the exact same treatment.

6) Accommodate to diversity without becoming unreasonable or being afraid to set limits.

Diversity is important to a healthy society. Diverse needs should be accommodated within reason. Equity, rather than equality, may help define reasonable limits to accommodations.

7) Seek to understand the perspectives of others without writing a relativistic blank check.

Understanding the perspectives of others can lead to effective strategies for change. However, that does not mean that one has to grant every perspective free reign. Respecting others' perspectives enough to critically engage with them will lead to best results.

8) Maintain a personal moral compass while navigating a world of laws, codes, and mores.

Be aware of and cultivate your own personal morals and ethics. Use them as a guide for your actions. However, everyone has to negotiate between society's laws and codes, and a personal ethic. Think carefully before going against either society's laws or your own ethical ideals.

Adapted from a plenary speech delivered by Carlos E. Cortés on July 25, 2008 at Portland State University in Oregon.