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PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

Because they are essential in his own professional working relations with clients, every social case worker should be able to subscribe to such principles as the following, and to make them the basis of frequent self-evaluation:

1. "I respect the dignity of the individual human personality as the basis for all social relationships.
2. "I have faith in the ultimate capacity of the common man to advance toward higher goals.
3. "I shall base my relations with others on their qualities as individual human beings, without distinction as to race or creed or color or economic or social status.
4. "I stand ready to sacrifice my own immediate interests when they conflict with the ultimate good of all.
5. "I recognize that my greatest gift to another person may be an opportunity for him to develop and exercise his own capacities.
6. "I shall not invade the personal affairs of another individual without his consent, except when in an emergency I must act to prevent injury to him or to others.
7. "I believe that an individual's greatest pride, as well as his greatest contribution to society, may lie in the ways in which he is different from me and from others, rather than in the ways in which he conforms to the crowd. I shall therefore accept these differences and endeavor to build a useful relationship upon them.
8. "I shall always base my opinion of another person on a genuine attempt to understand him-- to understand not merely his words, but the man himself and his whole situation and what it means to him.
9. "As a first essential to the understanding of others, I shall constantly seek a deeper understanding and control of myself and of my own attitudes and prejudices which may affect my relationships."

There may be other principles fundamental to good social case work practice, but precepts such as these may ultimately form the basis for a sort of "Hippocratic Oath" for social case workers. Our professional education is an elaboration of them, and our social case work methods and skills must be built upon them.

Excerpts from "A Social Work
Creed and Democracy".

Linton B. Swift