

Fundamental Fairness

You've probably read this saying hundreds of times before: "treat everyone alike." I've read it, and I've said it many hundreds of times. It is great advice that was given to me many years ago. Recently, I've heard it a different way and it has made me think about many of my other beliefs. The saying I heard recently was, "don't treat everyone alike... treat everyone fairly."

In analyzing this statement, I found that the meaning focuses upon our individual differences, which creates our uniqueness; caused by our different heritage, nurturing, varied life experiences, and the many other personal characteristics that make up our individuality.

The emphasis is not against commonality, but more a celebration of our diversity. We are all different and we all have our individuality. We all desire to be treated as individuals, and we all want people to know about our different needs and wants. Therefore, I think we can recognize that, if we treated everyone alike, we'd be forcing all kinds of shapes and sizes into the same small, round hole.

Treating everyone fairly is what we really desired. Acknowledging that all people differ, recognizing that people are unique, and understanding that people can change, while you are cognizant of all this – just treat me fairly. What people want is fairness.

So the next time someone says “you need to treat everyone alike,” realize that what they may really mean is for you to treat everyone fairly while recognizing each person’s uniqueness.