



# MUHAMMAD ALI'S 6 CORE PRINCIPLES DEFINED

*Muhammad Ali*, a film by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon, premieres Sept 19 8/7c on PBS stations nationwide (check local listings). Check out [pbs.org/ali](https://www.pbs.org/ali) to learn more and follow [#MuhammadAliPBS](https://twitter.com/MuhammadAliPBS) to join the conversation about one of the most indelible figures of the 20th Century.

There have been very few people in the world who have successfully been able to transcend their career or profession to become a symbol of larger, societal issues. As an athlete, Muhammad Ali was a *three-time* world heavyweight boxing champion and an Olympic gold medalist. He devoted himself to humanitarian work during his boxing career, and dedicated himself *full-time* to this life work since retiring from the ring. Ali always said that boxing was merely the vehicle that gave him the means to help others. His athletic achievements provided Ali with a platform to be heard, and he truly believed that he was put on this earth exactly for that reason—to use this unique gift to positively benefit humanity, one person at a time.

Ali traveled the world on missions related to peace, building mutual respect, and healing. He was a United Nations Messenger of Peace and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was a man who believed that the greatest possibilities for global peace and unity begin with individual transformation. Muhammad Ali's life embodied his principles and ideals. They guided him through the hard work necessary to be the best athlete he could be, and they gave him the strength and courage throughout his life to stand up for what he believed.

It is Ali's six core principles of **confidence, conviction, dedication, respect, giving, and spirituality** that inspired his work and that are embedded in the mission and goals of the Muhammad Ali Center in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. The Muhammad Ali Center's mission focuses on preserving and promoting Muhammad Ali's legacy, sharing his SIX CORE PRINCIPLES, and being a repository of inspiration and guidance for all.

## **1 Confidence: belief in oneself, one's abilities, and one's future**

Ali had the confidence and drive it took to become an Olympian and a world heavyweight champion. He possessed a "deep well" of belief in himself that gave him a second and third world heavyweight championship title. He lifted up people of color in the U.S. and around the world by announcing, "I'm so pretty" and "I'm The Greatest."

**"Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."**

—MUHAMMAD ALI

**"It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen."**

—MUHAMMAD ALI

## **2 Conviction: a firm belief that gives one the courage to stand behind that belief, despite pressure to do otherwise**

Ali found the courage and commitment to become a conscientious objector—standing up for his beliefs, no matter what the consequences: *"The real enemy of my people is right here. I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom, and equality."*

## **3 Dedication: the act of devoting all of one's energy, effort, and abilities to a certain task**

From an early age, Ali found the physical endurance and discipline to become a world champion: roadwork, gym work, sparring, diet, positive mindset, and putting his dreams first.

## **4 Respect: esteem for, or a sense of the worth or excellence of, oneself and others**

Ali's life path led him to respecting self and others, his purpose and God. He recognized that attaining these ideals was individual, communal, and universal.

## **5 Giving: to present voluntarily without expecting something in return**

Ali traveled the world to learn about its people and to offer assistance wherever he could. Even as a world champion, he did not see himself as different from others: *"I'll still walk in the ghettos, answer questions, and kiss babies. I'll never forget my people."*

## **6 Spirituality: a sense of awe, reverence, and inner peace inspired by a connection to all of creation and/or that which is greater than oneself**

Ali believed that the world's spiritual traditions have in common many heart-centered human values: love, hope, charity, justice, and peace. He worked across religious traditions to advance the dignity of all humanity and was grounded in his faith, yet acknowledged a higher power that connected us: *"Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams—they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do—they all contain truths."*

Today, our city, country, and world are ripe for individuals making and being a positive difference. We can all become leaders in our communities by sharing an undeniable drive to achieve our individual and collective dreams, and by using the irrefutable characteristics that we all possess in order to be successful. The attainment of these dreams takes dedication, commitment, self-discipline, courage, and a strong moral centering.

**"I am an ordinary man who worked hard to develop the talent I was given. I believed in myself, and I believe in the goodness of others."**

—MUHAMMAD ALI