

# Millard's 33 Commandments of Plastic Surgery

S Saraf

## Citation

S Saraf. *Millard's 33 Commandments of Plastic Surgery*. The Internet Journal of Plastic Surgery. 2006 Volume 4 Number 1.

## Abstract

The breadth and depth of plastic surgery has been distilled into 33 fundamental principles by Dr. D Ralph Millard. These principles have stood the test of time and still have relevance today.

## Figure 1



## D Ralph Millard, Jr., M.D.

More than four hundred years past, Ambroise Pare<sub>1</sub>, in 1564 conceived and published the five basic Plastic Surgery principles, namely, take away what is superfluous, restore to their places things which are displaced, separate those things which are joined together, to join those which are separated and to supply the defects of the nature. In 1950, Millard published Sir Harold Gillies' Principles as the ten commandments namely, thou shalt make a plan, thou shalt have a style, honor that which is normal and return it to normal position, thou shalt not throw away a living thing, thou shalt not bear false witness against thy defect, thou shalt treat the primary defect before worrying about the secondary one, thou shalt provide thyself with a lifeboat, thou shalt not do today what you canst put off until tomorrow, thou shalt not have a routine, thou shalt not cover thy neighbor's plastic unit, handmaidens, forehead flaps, Thiersch graft, ox cartilage nor anything that is thy neighbor's<sub>1,2</sub>. In 1957, six more principles were added in the book "The Principles and Art of Plastic Surgery" by

Gillies and Millard<sub>3</sub>.

Dr. Millard tested these principles again and again and found these principles applicability not just only to solve plastic surgery problems but also appreciated their basic applicability in routine life. Later, Dr. Millard crystallized the breadth and depth of plastic surgery into proverbs of 33 fundamental principles of Plastic Surgery and compiled them in Millard's 'Principlization of Plastic Surgery' in 1986<sub>1</sub>.

These philosophical but practical plastic surgical pearls have stood the test of time and still pertinent today. The real value of these principles lies in their truths from which answers can be derived by logic for any variety of problems rather than depending on memorized blueprints<sub>1</sub>. The principles have been categorized as Preoperational Principles, Executional Principles, Innovational Principles, Contributional Principles and Inspirational Principles. All of the following 33 principles<sub>1</sub> are self-explanatory and in spite of present day technological evolution and advancements in plastic surgery, these principles have stood the test of time and their present day applicability is the testament of their basic truth.

## PREOPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. Correct the Order of Priorities
2. Aptitude Should Determine Specialization
3. Mobilize Auxiliary Capabilities
4. Acknowledge Your Limitations so as do no harm
5. Extend Your Abilities to Do the Most Good
6. Seek Insight into the Patient's True Desires
7. Have a Goal and a Dream
8. Know the Ideal Beautiful Normal
9. Be Familiar with the Literature
10. Keep an Accurate Record

- 11. Attend to Physical Condition & Comfort of Position
- 12. Do Not Underestimate the Enemy

**EXECUTIONAL PRINCIPLES**

- 13. Diagnose Before Treating
- 14. Return what is Normal to Normal Position & Retain it There
- 15. Tissue Losses Should be Replaced in Kind
- 16. Reconstruct by Units
- 17. Make a Plan, a Pattern, & a Second Plan (Lifeboat)
- 18. Invoke a Scot's Economy
- 19. Use Robin Hood's Tissue Apportionment
- 20. Consider the Secondary Donor Area
- 21. Learn to Control Tension
- 22. Perfect Your Craftsmanship
- 23. When in Doubt, Don't

**INNOVATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

- 24. Follow-up with a Critical Eye
- 25. Avoid the Rut of Routine
- 26. Imagination Sparks Innovation
- 27. Think While Down and Turn a Setback into a Victory
- 28. Research Basic Truths by Laboratory Experimentation

**CONTRIBUTIONAL PRINCIPLES**

- 29. Gain Access to Other Specialties' Problems

- 30. Teaching our Specialty is Its Best Legacy
- 31. Participate in Reconstructive Missions

**INSPIRATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

- 32. Go for Broke
- 33. Think principles Until They Become Instinctively Automatic in Your Modus operandi

Know the Ideal, Beautiful, Normal .Diagnose what is present, what is diseased, destroyed, displaced, or distorted and what is in excess. Then guided by the normal in your mind's eye, utilize what you have to make what you want - and when possible, go for even better than what would have been! ..... D Ralph Millard

**CORRESPONDENCE TO**

Dr. Sanjay Saraf Dept. of Plastic Surgery NMC Specialty Hospital Dubai, UAE. E-mail: drsaraf@hotmail.com

**References**

- 1. Millard DR Jr. Principlization of Plastic Surgery. 1st Ed. Boston / Toronto: Little Brown & Co.; 1986.
- 2. Millard DR Jr. Plastic Peregrinations. Plast Reconstr Surg 1950; 5:26-53.
- 3. Gillies HD and Millard DR Jr. The Principles and Art of Plastic Surgery. 1st Ed. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.; 1957.

**Author Information**

**Sanjay Saraf, MS, MCh. (Plastic Surgery), Dip. National Board (Plastic Surgery), MNAMS**  
Dept. of Plastic Surgery, NMC Specialty Hospital