

Adlai's Core Ideas

Adlai E. Stevenson II was a thinker, diplomat, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. presidential candidate, governor of Illinois, journalist, and more. He was born in 1900 into a family deeply rooted in politics. He was named after his grandfather, U.S. Vice President Adlai Stevenson (1835-1914). His maternal grandfather Jesse Fell (1808-1887) — a well-known name in Illinois and a strong influence on the young Adlai — is credited with convincing Abraham Lincoln to run for the presidency.

Elected governor of Illinois in 1948, Adlai gained respect and national attention for his progressive, liberal¹ viewpoints. His ability to attract young, talented people to government was admired, as was his fiscal conservatism² and ability to manage state finances.

Until his death in 1965, Adlai felt that being involved in public life was critical to the survival of democratic society and to achieving world peace. He remains an active presence today. Quoted by leaders and studied by scholars, he is a standard by which political leaders are measured for their integrity and their commitment to the principles of democracy.

His ideas remain relevant — perhaps critical — even today.

One way to consider Adlai's ideas is to notice three underlying core values that permeate his life's work: THINK, CARE, CONNECT

THINK

Adlai was a thinker. He was an intellectual who believed in the power of careful thought and dialogue. He trusted — and expected — people to think for themselves and to participate actively in public life.

4 ways Adlai put this core value into action — THINK:

- Engage in thoughtful dialogue.
- Consider multiple perspectives.
- Act with integrity and honesty.
- Understand history and culture.

CARE

Adlai cared. He went out of his way to learn about people. He talked with people directly, then translated what he learned into policies that responded to their needs.

4 ways Adlai put this core value into action — CARE:

- Promote liberal policies.
- Put ideas into action.
- Reform government.
- Promote education to sustain democracy.

CONNECT

Adlai connected with people. And, he expected people to connect with one another — to understand and be responsible for their neighbors both at home and abroad. Adlai became a recognized world leader and a strong advocate for making global connections.

4 ways Adlai put this core value into action — CONNECT:

- Be mindful of our neighbors.
- Engage the wider world.
- Don't be an isolationist.
- Serve the public.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ **Liberal** political views favor progress and reform, the protection of civil liberties, and broad-minded tolerance of differences.

John F. Kennedy described Liberals by their views and actions, "...if by a "Liberal" they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people — their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights, and their civil liberties — someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a "Liberal," then I'm proud to say I'm a "Liberal."

—**John F. Kennedy, Acceptance Speech of the New York Liberal Party Nomination**
September 14, 1960

² **Fiscal conservative** views generally favor lowering government spending and the state and federal debt.