



Key facts:

Throughout recorded history there have been non-religious people who have believed that this life is the only life we have, that the universe is a natural phenomenon with no supernatural side, and that we can live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. They have trusted to the scientific method, evidence, and reason to discover truths about the universe and have placed human welfare and happiness at the centre of their ethical decision making.

Today, people who share these beliefs and values are called humanists and this combination of attitudes is called humanism.

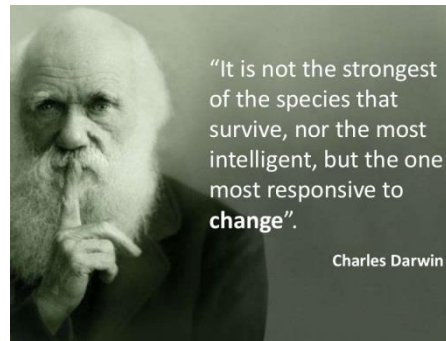
Humanists value truthfulness, justice, freedom and happiness as positive values and aims in life. Humanists do not refer to religious texts or authorities when making moral decisions but to their own reason.

Humanists believe we can use reason and empathy to support us when deciding how we should treat other people. When considering ethics and ethical decisions humanists believe we should look at individual cases, considering carefully the individual situation and the effect of possible choices on the well-being of people, animals, the environment and the wider community. When making ethical decisions humanists try to follow the golden rule - treat other people as you would like them to treat you.

Humanists believe that the universe is governed by the laws of physics and not by a supernatural being, and that animal and plant diversity on Earth is the result of evolutionary forces not of divine commands.

Humanists believe we should enjoy the positive things in life if it is possible to do that without harming the environment or other people. Humanists believe it is important to make responsible choices. Humanists believe in active citizenship and will often be found campaigning against something they have decided is unjust.

Secular ceremonies for weddings, baby welcoming and funerals, are popular for humanists and others who want to celebrate or mark these significant life events without using religious texts, buildings or leaders. There are generally local celebrants and 'Humanist UK' provides texts to support these ceremonies.



Key vocabulary:

Active citizenship: means people getting involved in their local communities and democracy at all levels, from towns to cities to nationwide activity. Active citizenship can be as small as a campaign to clean up your street or as big as educating young people about democratic values, skills and participation

Atheist: a person who disbelieves or lacks belief in the existence of God or gods.

Agnostic: a person who believes that the existence of God, of the divine or the supernatural is unknown or unknowable.

Celebrant: A humanist celebrant is someone who writes and conducts humanist (non-religious) ceremonies.

Ethics: moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or how they carry out an activity.

A humanist:

- trusts to the scientific method when it comes to understanding how the universe works and rejects the idea of the supernatural (and is therefore an atheist or agnostic)
- makes their ethical decisions based on reason, empathy, and a concern for human beings and other sentient animals
- believes that, in the absence of an afterlife and any discernible purpose to the universe, human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same.

Humanist UK: A UK organisation that brings non-religious people together to develop their own views and an understanding of the world around them

Secular: not connected with religious or spiritual matters.

Supernatural: attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature.