



# Ethical decision-making in an uncertain world

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building an  
**ethical**  
SOCIETY

# Topics

**1. Ethics – a shared meaning**

**2. Ethical decision-making**

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**1. Ethics – a shared meaning**

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# Ethics a shared meaning

Our civilization is dependent on:

- Specialisation
- Division of labour (skills)
- Interaction (i.e., stockmarkets)
- Cooperation

How many people need to do their jobs effectively to get a passenger aircraft to fly from Johannesburg to Cape Town?

# What is the good?

**Golden rule:**

**“Do unto others as you would want to be done unto you”**



# What is the good?

## Platinum Rule:

**“Do unto others as they would want to be done unto them”**



# Ethics a shared meaning

Successful groups are defined by:

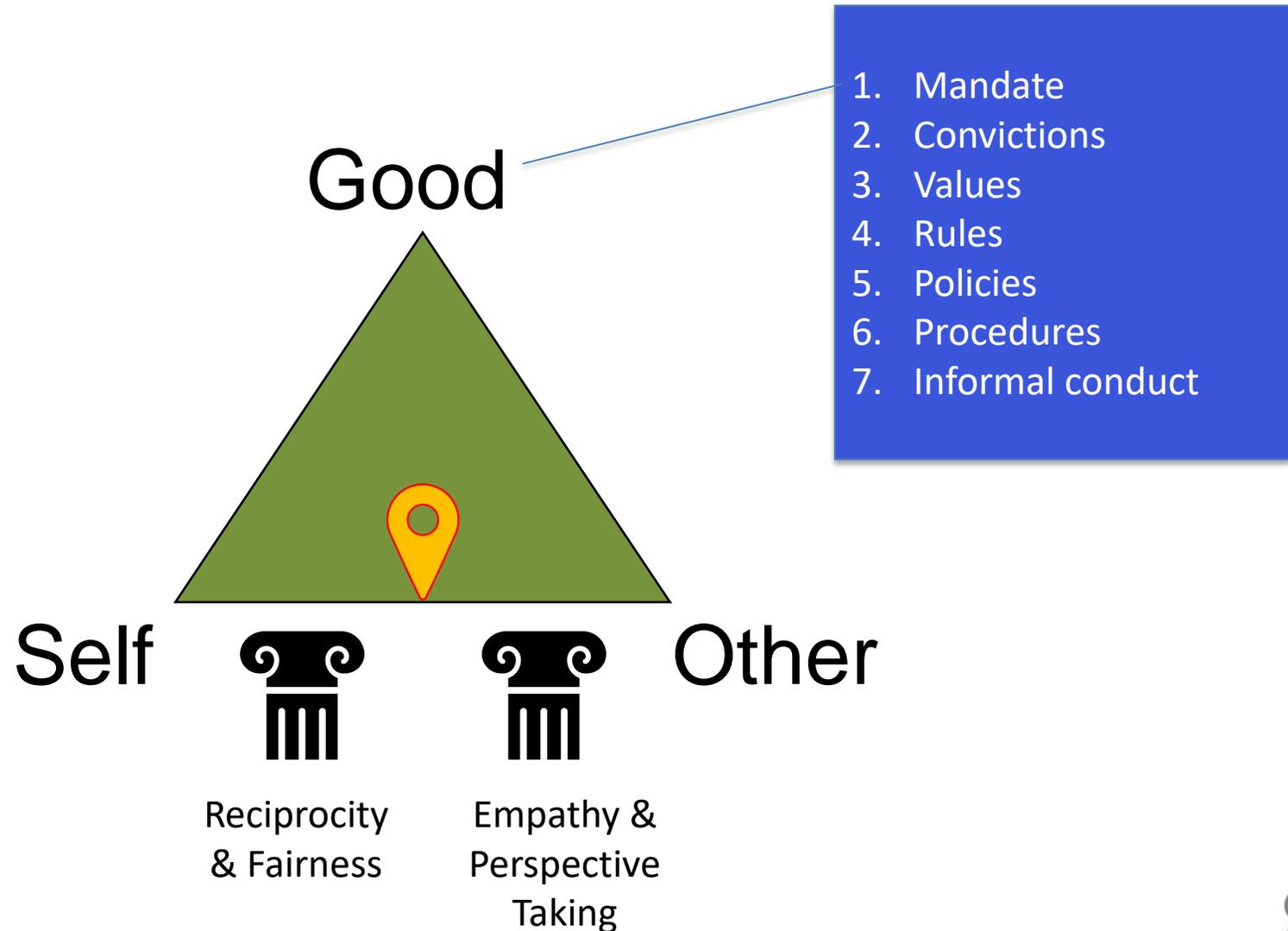
- Trust
- Cooperation
- Honest and open communication
- Fairness and justice
- Reciprocal altruism (mutual beneficence/ zero sum games)

# Ethics a shared meaning

What is ethics/morality?

- **Well founded** standards of **right** and **wrong** that **prescribe** what we ought to do in social interactions (normative).
  - Allows for fairness and cooperation (reciprocity)
  - Mutualism (empathy)
- Dynamic social processes (not static)
  - Re-calibration over time and context  
(i.e., marijuana, pro-choice, death penalty etc.)

# Ethics and business ethics



# Topics

**1. Ethics – a shared meaning**

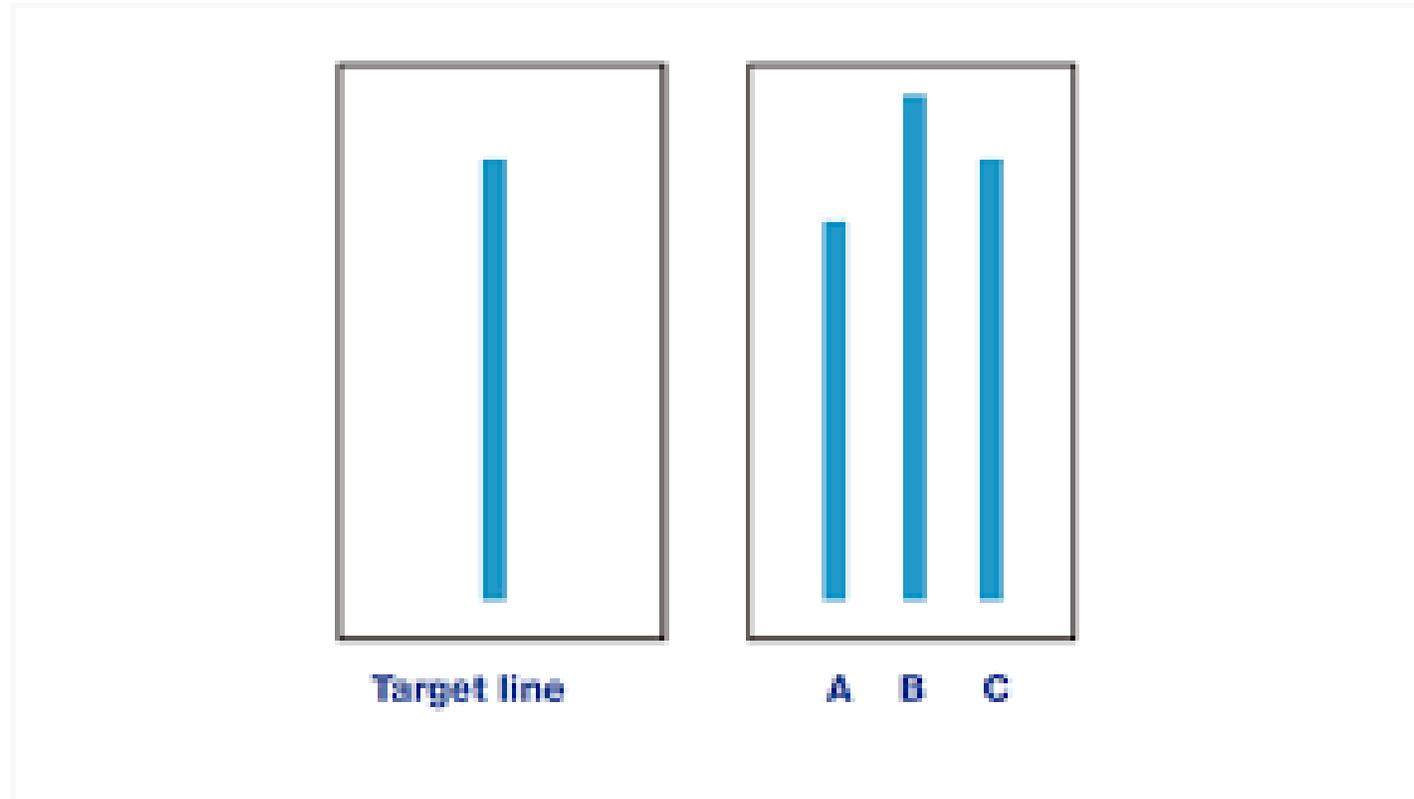
**2. Ethical decision-making in an uncertain world**

# Types of ethical problems

## (i) The ethical challenge

- Normally something where there is a clear 'right' and 'wrong'
- Usually there are policies, rules, or codes that can be followed
- The biggest challenge is whether the person does the right thing (temptations)
- Easy to defuse

# Who controls your behaviour – Group Conformity



# Who controls your behaviour - Obedience to Authority



# Who controls your behaviour – Stanford Prison Experiment



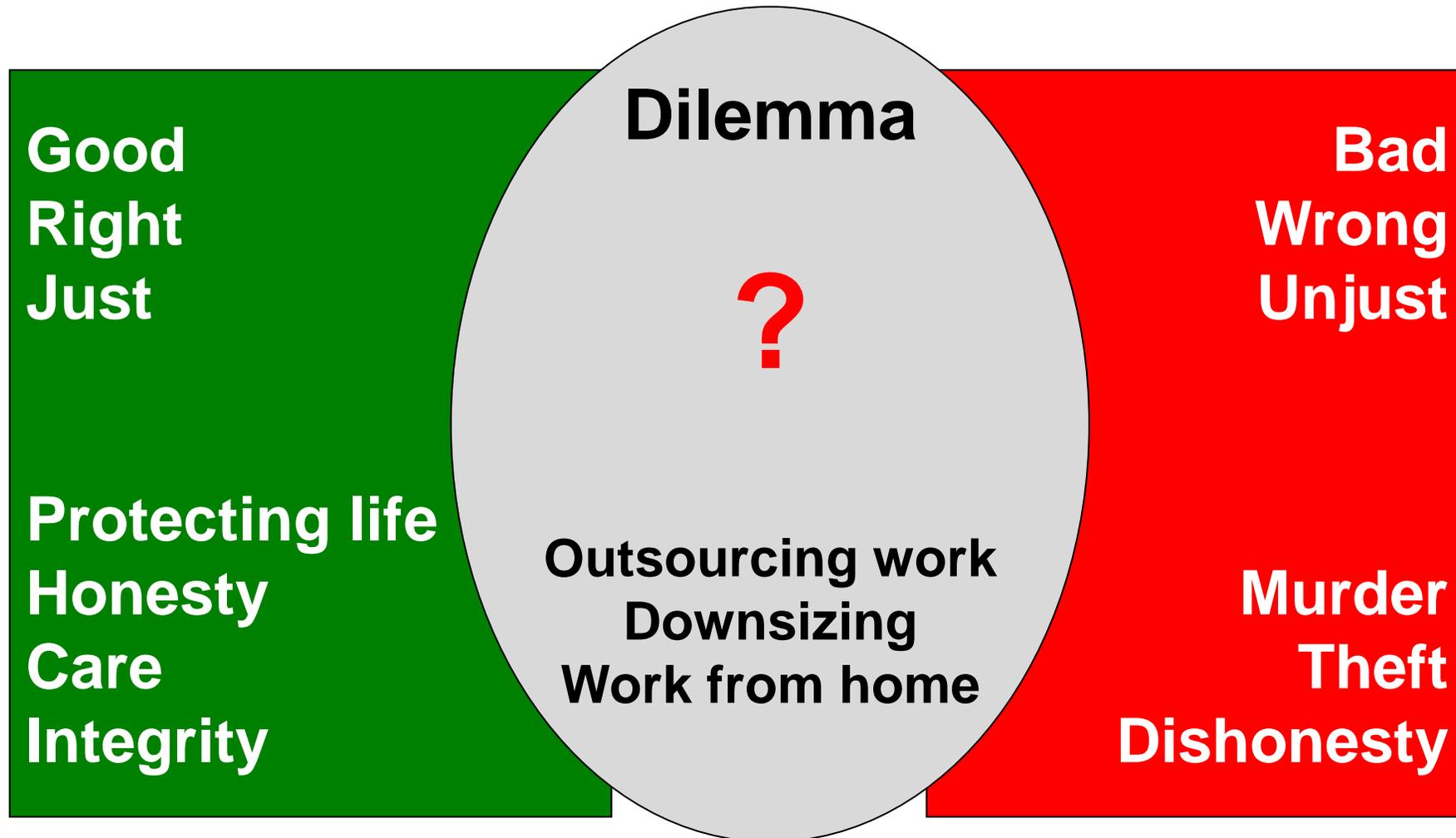
# Who controls your behaviour - The Bystander Effect



## (ii) The ethical dilemma

- When we face two or more choices, all of which lead to less than desirable consequences (David Steward)
- When certain values conflict
- Damage control (moral imagination)
- Reduce harm

# Right, wrong and dilemma



# Ethical decision-making



## Level 1 – Pre-conventional morality

- I do not want to be caught.
- I am scared of being punished!



## Level 2 – Conventional morality

- I follow the rules no matter what
- I want my society to see me as a good person



## Level 3 – Post-conventional morality

- Rules are only guidelines
- There are universal principles of right and wrong

# A problem with being 'too ethical'

Relativism

Dialogue?

Universalism

# Utilitarianism – the needs of the many



# Deontology – The needs of the one



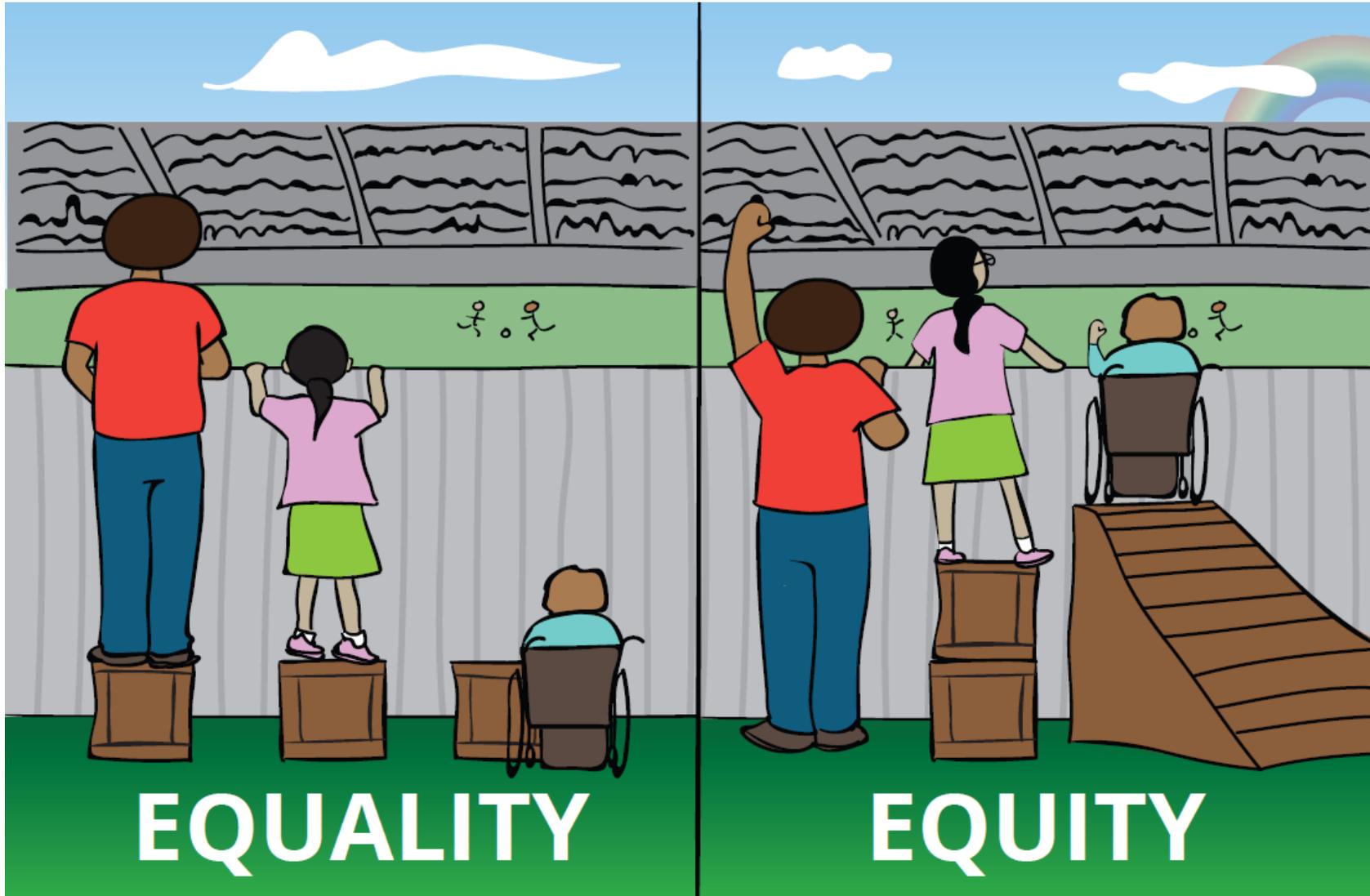
# Ticking Bomb Scenario



# Common Good Approach (the needs of my society)



# Fairness and Justice Approach (what is fair?)



# Virtue Ethics (who do I become?)



## Stakeholders

Identify the stakeholders affected by your action or decision

## Evaluating my decision/action

Ethics Lens 1:  
Utilitarianism

Ethics Lens 2:  
Deontology

Ethics Lens 3:  
The common good

Ethics Lens 4:  
Fairness and justice

## Making an ethical decision

Ethics Lens 5:  
Virtues

How to make an optimal decision

# Stakeholders

**Identify the stakeholders affected by your action or decision:**

1. Have we identified/ engaged with our stakeholders?
2. Do we understand the legitimate expectations our stakeholders hold?
3. Can we make a decision that meets our stakeholders' legitimate expectations?
4. Have I reviewed company standards/rules, codes to ensure my decision/action is in line with these?



## Evaluating my decision/action

### Lens 1: Utilitarianism

Can I decide or act so that all stakeholders benefit?

If not, can I make a decision/take action so that the fewest number of stakeholders are harmed by my decisions and that the most benefit (when dealing with an ethical dilemma for example)?

## Evaluating my decision/action

### Lens 2: Deontology

Have I considered the rights of people before I make a decision/take action? Does my decision pass these two tests:

1. If I make my decision into a general rule, that everybody can and should do this thing, would the world be a better or worse place to live in?
2. How would I feel if I was on the receiving end of the decision or action? Would I be okay with how I am treated?

## Evaluating my decision/action

### Lens 3: The common good

Is my decision in the best interest of my community? How would my community react to my action/decision if I were to share it with:

1. The public at large
2. My profession
3. My close family

## Evaluating my decision/action

### **Lens 4: Fairness and justice**

Is my action/decision fair to all parties involved? If my decision does not result in equal treatment, can I justify this through equitable treatment?

Have I communicated why my decision is equitable to the stakeholders involved (i.e., have I justified my decision if people are not treated the same)?



## Making an ethical decision

### Lens 5: Virtues

How does the decision/action make me feel as a person?

Is the decision/action helping me to reach my professional and personal potential as a human being? This is a personal question and can only be answered subjectively



# Making an ethical decision

## How to make an optimal decision:

1. Ensure that others are included in your decision-making such as team members, managers or other employees (test your thinking with others)
2. Make sure that your decision is in line with the organisation's values, policies, codes and rules.
3. Not all the tenets need to be used, nor should you use this as a checkbox exercise. Instead let the tenets help to shape your decisions.
4. Make sure that you can convince your stakeholders that your decision has merit and explain difficulties in the decision or considerations (communicate to stakeholders how you arrived at this decision).
5. Always remember to balance what is good for the organisation with what is good for its stakeholders.



## Stakeholders

### Identify the stakeholders affected by your action or decision

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## Evaluating my decision/action

### Ethics Lens 1

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### Ethics Lens 2

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### Ethics Lens 3

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### Ethics Lens 4

Is my action/decision fair to all parties involved? If my decision does not result in equal treatment, can I justify this through equitable treatment? Have I communicated why my decision is equitable to the stakeholders involved (i.e., have I justified my decision if people are not treated the same)?

## Making an ethical decision

### Ethics Lens 5

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### How to make an optimal decision

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# Summary and conclusion

- Ethics is a **prosocial construct**
- Ethics is about the **'good'**
- The needs of the **'self'** and the **'other'** must be considered
- Identifying and understanding **stakeholders' legitimate ethical expectations** is key
- **Ethics dialogue** is critical to the ethical maturity of an organisation (ethics talk)
- Ethics is about **context!**
- Tough decisions, require **good justification** and **open communication**



**Thank you.**



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