

## ETHICS APPROACHES\*

Approach	Focus	Principle
<b>Virtue Approach</b>	Attitudes, dispositions, or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop our human potential (eg, honesty, courage, integrity)	What is ethical is what develops moral virtues in ourselves and our communities.
<b>Utilitarian Approach</b>	Consequences that actions or policies have on the well-being ("utility") of all persons directly or indirectly affected by the action or policy.	Of any two actions, the most ethical one will produce the greatest balance of benefits over harms.
<b>Rights Approach</b>	Identifies interests or activities that our behavior must respect, especially those areas of our lives that are of such value to us that they merit protection from others. Each person has a fundamental right to be respected and treated as a free and equal rational being capable of making his or her own decisions. This implies other rights (e.g., privacy, free consent, freedom of conscience, etc.) that must be protected if a person is to have the freedom to direct his or her own life.	An action or policy is morally right only if those persons affected by the decision are not used merely as instruments for advancing some goal, but are fully informed and treated only as they have freely and knowingly consented to be treated.
<b>Fairness (Justice)</b>	How fairly or unfairly our actions distribute benefits and burdens among the members of a group. Fairness requires consistency in the way people are treated.	Treat people the same unless there are morally relevant differences between them.
<b>Common Good Approach</b>	Presents a vision of society as a community whose members are joined in a shared pursuit of values and goals they hold in common. The community is comprised of individuals whose own good is inextricably bound to the good of the whole.	What is ethical is what advances the common good.
<b>Care-based Approach</b>	Source of the moral life is in the human capacity to extend care to others, to nurture relationships and to develop the communication, psychological skills and responsibility needed to sustain these networks of care. Moral problems arise out of disruptions in or conflicts between responsibilities to self and others and they require a type of thinking which is contextual and narrative.	What is ethical is what best responds to the individualized needs of those with whom I live in relationship, people with unique life narratives and plans

\* Adapted with permission from "Approaching Ethics," by the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, [www.scu.edu/ethics](http://www.scu.edu/ethics). Care-based approach added by Carol Taylor, PhD, MSN, Director, Center for Clinical Bioethics and Assistant Professor of Nursing, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.