

Clemson University
Rutland Institute for Ethics
STAR Decision-Making Model

Stop – Recognize, Identify, and Develop

Test – Use the following six ethical tests

- Harm Test
- Legality Test
- Precedent Test
- Respect Test
- Golden Rule Test
- Personal Ethics Test

Act – Make a Decision

Reflect – Consider the Outcome, Take Responsibility,
and Adapt for the Future

STAR Decision-Making Model

When confronted with an ethical dilemma, use the STAR Decision-Making Model for help in determining a solution:

S = Stop

- Take the time to recognize the ethical problem and all of the issues surrounding and contributing to the problem.
- Identify the affected parties and the impact the issue is having.
- Develop at least three solutions to the problem.

T = Test

For each potential solution, use all of the tests below.

- Harm Test – Does this option reduce, eliminate, or mitigate harm to the greatest extent?
- Legality Test – Is this option legal?
- Precedent Test – Does this option set a precedent, which, while the outcome in this fact pattern may not be problematic, would create a dramatically different outcome in another fact pattern?
- Respect Test – What would someone you respect or hold in high regard say when you describe your problem and suggest this option as your solution? (e.g., a mentor, parent, peer, colleague, relative, ethical guidelines for your profession, or your professional code of conduct).
- Golden Rule Test – Would I still think the choice of this option good if I were one of those adversely affected by it? How would I want to be treated?
- Personal Ethics Test – How does this match or not align with my personal code of ethics?

A = Act

Using these tests as a lens to gain insight into your dilemma, make a decision and act upon that decision.

R = Reflect

Now that you've made a decision, take responsibility and own the decision. Pause to reconcile the solution with anticipated outcomes and reflect on what you've learned from the process. If necessary, adapt and modify your decision to secure the most positive results possible.