

Moral dilemmas

A **moral dilemma** is a situation in which you need to make a choice about what is the right or wrong thing to do. Sometimes we might decide what to do because we expect a reward or we are afraid of being punished. Many humanists believe being good is about more than this. Rules about how we should behave can sometimes be helpful, but not always. Humanists (and many other people) believe we need to **think for ourselves**. We need to think about the **impact** of our actions on other people, animals, and the planet.

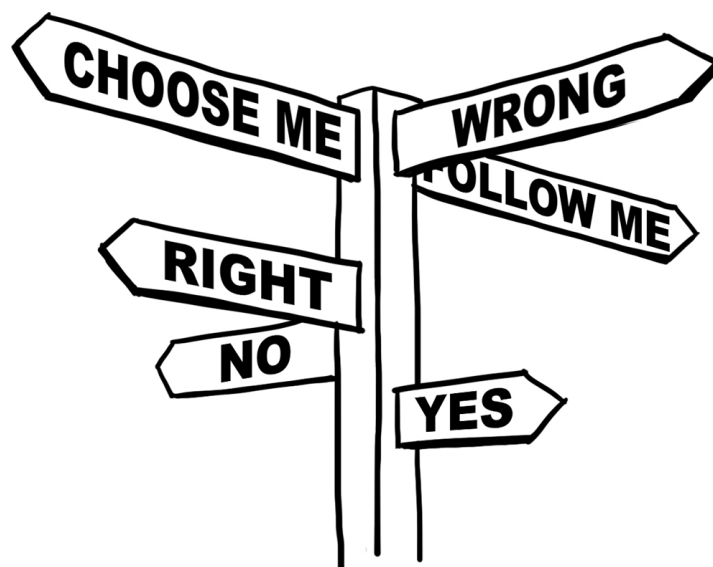
- 1) We can imagine the **consequences** of our actions (and consider what would happen if everyone behaved the way we did).
- 2) We can use **empathy** to imagine how other people might feel.
- 3) We can treat others the way we would like to be treated (the **Golden Rule**).

Many humanists believe that reading and listening to stories about other people and imagining situations can help us to develop empathy.

Look at the following moral dilemmas. How might a humanist say we should respond and why?

Think about the following:

- Who might you have **empathy** with?
- How might you use the **Golden Rule**?
- What would be the **consequences** of the different options?
- What would the world be like if everyone acted the same way?



Moral dilemmas

1) A new girl arrives in your class. She has come from another country and doesn't know anyone. Some of your friends say that you should not make friends with her. They say there is no room for new people in your group of friends. What should you do?

2) You are walking across the school playground at the end of break time when you notice a toy on the floor. It is a toy that you have always really wanted. Your friend says you should put it in your bag and take it home. No one else is looking. What should you do?

3) You are playing football. Both teams have scored once. In the final minute your teammate crosses the ball to you. You are not confident at heading the ball but you can reach it with your hand and punch it into the goal. The referee is looking the other way. What should you do?

4) You really want a new computer game but you don't have enough money to buy it. A friend says he knows a website where you can download it for free. He says it's not the same as stealing. What should you do?

5) You have just finished eating an ice lolly on the beach and are left with the wrapper. There are no bins. Your friend says you should just leave it on the sand as the sea will wash it away. What should you do?

6) A friend asks you to keep a secret. You promise not to tell anyone else. Later that day you feel like you really want to tell your friend's secret to someone else. Telling it to just one other person wouldn't hurt would it? What should you do?