

# Ethical Leadership

Being a student leader often means that you are living in a glass house. People are watching your every move, observing the “right” way to do things. Leadership and ethics go hand in hand. Identifying and knowing your personal code of ethics will serve as a valuable filter when you experience an ethical dilemma.

## 5 Basic Ethical Principles

### Do No Harm

- Avoid harm to others—both psychological and physical harm

### Act to Benefit Others

- Make a positive contribution to another’s welfare
- Promote personal growth and opportunity

### Show Respect for Each Person

- The freedom to think, choose, and act
- Respect for the autonomy of others
- The right to privacy and confidentiality
- The right to informed consent

### Promote Justice

- Fair and just treatment of all persons
- Fair distributions of goods, services, and rewards

### Be Faithful, Keep Promises

- The obligation to keep promises
- The obligation to be loyal and truthful

*From: Kitchener, K.S. (1985). Ethical principles and ethical decisions in college student affairs. In H.J. Cannon & R.D. Brown (Eds.), New directions for student services: Applied ethics in student services, no 30. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.*



Take some time  
to keep in Mind...

were created specifically for the times when you want to take a time out—so you have a frame of reference to turn to when doing “the right thing” doesn’t come naturally or easily.

...there are no “time outs” when it comes to a leadership code of ethics. Ethics and expectations

## Getting in Touch with Your Guiding Principles

Chances are that you have your own ethical code of conduct, those rules that guide you between right and wrong, good and bad. Have you ever put them down on paper, though? Sometimes having something in writing lets you really take a good, hard look at whether or not you’re living the life of integrity that you suppose you are.

## Walk the Talk

You have your code of ethics. How does it influence your role as a leader? Consider how ethical leaders treat those they work with and serve.

1. Ethical leaders do not convey intentionally deceptive or harmful messages to others.
2. Ethical leaders place concern for others above concern for personal gain.
3. Ethical leaders respect the opinions and attitudes of others.
4. Ethical leaders defend others when they are censured for carrying out policies supported by the leader.
5. Ethical leaders are consistent in their treatment of others regardless of gender, ethnic, or social background.
6. Ethical leaders establish clear and uniform policies and procedures that are implemented consistently throughout the group, organization, or society.
7. Ethical leaders follow the “golden rule of leadership” by demonstrating a willingness to meet the expectations required of all members.

## Reflection Section

Sometimes you will find yourself struggling with the ethics of a situation. Leadership is much more gray than black and white, particularly during ethical dilemmas. When you come upon these challenging scenarios, take the time to reflect on what those you respect in your life would think. What would...

- ✓ Your parents or family members think?
- ✓ Your faculty members think?
- ✓ Your advisor think?
- ✓ Your faith leader think?
- ✓ Your coach think?