

Clemson University
Rutland Institute for Ethics
STAR Decision-Making Model

Stop – Recognize, Identify, and Develop

Test – Use at least three of the following six ethical tests

- Harm Test
- Legality Test
- Precedence Test
- “Mom” Test
- Golden Rule Test
- Peer or Colleague 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 stakeholders (those affected by the problem) and the impact the issue is having
- Develop at least three solutions to the problem

T = Test

For each potential solution, use at least three of the following tests. For maximum effectiveness, it is best to use all of the tests.

- Harm Test – Does this option do less harm than the alternatives?
- Legality Test – Is this option legal?
- Precedence Test – Does this option set precedence, which, while the outcome in this fact pattern may not be problematic, would create a dramatically different outcome in another fact pattern?
- “Mom” Test – What would your mom or any admired/respected individual in your life say if he or she learned of this option?
- 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?
- Peer or Colleague Test – What do my peers or colleagues say when I describe my problem and suggest this option as my solution?

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.