# Lesson Element

# Hoop Jump (Learner Sheet 2)

This worksheet gives some information about making ethical decisions and asks questions inviting your response to these ideas. The questions could be discussed in groups or pairs but try to express your own individual thinking in what you write down.

### Task 1

Ethics studies the values and reasons behind people’s choices and presents theories about what constitutes morally good and morally bad actions. Three different ways of deciding between right and wrong are outlined below.

**Natural Law** is a belief that there are certain objective rules in the world that should never be broken. The world’s religions ascribe to a Natural Law, often instituted by a ruling being (God). Commonly-held guiding principles of different religions based on Natural Law are that it is wrong to kill people and to steal property. Religious beliefs give people a basic moral checklist like the Judeao-Christian Ten Commandments or a guiding principle like ‘Love your neighbour’.

The **Motivism** theory prioritises a person’s motives. For an action to be morally right the person must have a good intention and be acting unselfishly and out of a sense of duty to benefit others.

The **Consequentalism** theory says that what matters is the end result and that a person’s motives are irrelevant. **Utilitarianism** is a form of this theory and it measures the moral worth of an action by the ‘Greatest Happiness’ principle. A good action creates more happiness than suffering. A bad action creates more pain than benefits. When considering applications of biology potentially millions of people are affected by decisions to approve or not approve new technologies for medicine, agriculture and industry, and we must also weigh up the consequences for other species both in the short-term (suffering and death) and the long-term (extinction).

Can you recognise your own guiding principle for making moral decisions here?

### Task 2

Healthcare professionals operate according to these **medical ethics** principles:

* to provide benefits and balance benefits against risks
* to avoid doing harm
* to respect the patient’s wishes
* to fairly distribute resources for maximum benefit

Do these principles justify the following scenarios? Complete the table below, and explain your reasoning:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scenario** | **Yes or No?** | **Justify your reasoning** |
| Vaccinating a child and making it cry. |  |  |
| Not funding research into a drug for a very rare disease. |  |  |
| Allowing an anorexic to refuse food. |  |  |
| Trying a drug licensed for one use on a very ill patient with a different disease. |  |  |

### Task 3

The **principle of double effect** recognises that sometimes a good and a bad effect may result from an action, eg the benefit of self-preservation and the effect of harming another when acting in self-defence.

Can you think of other examples of actions that have both a good and a bad effect?

### Task 4 Conclusion

Which do you think matters most in making an ethical decision:

* weighing up proportional benefit and harm
* moral absolutes
* a person’s motives (intentions)
* the consequences of the action