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Activity

Making sense of ethics: taking it further

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In a group, each one of you is assigned one of these six ethical theories.

- Egoism/hedonism/narcissism
- utilitarianism
- Kant
- situation ethics
- natural law (if you are a large group you can give each person one of the primary precepts and see how different the answers are)
- virtue ethics

Work out how each can be applied to the ethical issues below. Discuss and debate your findings.

Are some responses always the same?

Are there issues where all the theories agree?

Where there are very different views and opinions, what do you think is causing this?

Issues

- 1 A woman has just won the *X Factor* but has found out that she is pregnant and will not be able to travel.
- 2 An individual has lost all their motor functions and cannot speak. They have no quality of life but their partner wants to keep them alive.
- 3 A company has invented a genetically modified plant that will help stop soil erosion in a fragile environment.
- 4 A large company with a poor environmental record wants to open a new factory in an area with mass unemployment.
- 5 An internationally known peacemaker is just about to lead a delegation to attempt to end a war. He needs a lung transplant to survive but is also a heavy smoker.
- 6 A developing country can only continue to feed and care for its inhabitants by the exploitation of child labour.
- 7 A very expensive drug has been developed that could prevent many people dying from cancer. However, it is so expensive that it would mean cutting back on other peoples' treatments.