

Ethical Judgment

Move from what is possible to what is responsible.

A WORKING DEFINITION

Ethical judgment is the capacity to recognize moral stakes, examine affected people, values, rights, duties and consequences, create responsible alternatives, and justify and own what ought to be done.

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IN PRACTICE

Surfaces who may benefit or be harmed, names competing values and obligations, tests more than one ethical lens, develops alternatives and explains the decision publicly.

It is

Reasoning about what ought to be done.

Attentive to power and affected people.

Open to competing legitimate values.

Expressed through accountable action.

It is not

Personal preference presented as principle.

Rule compliance without moral attention.

Calculating benefit while ignoring rights.

Adding an ethics paragraph after the decision.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

AI expands what organizations can predict, automate and scale. Ethical judgment keeps capability subordinate to dignity, fairness, responsibility and the right of affected people to be heard.

THE CAPABILITY LOOP

Ethical judgment needs more than one lens.

A responsible choice emerges by making moral stakes, affected people and competing obligations visible.



BEHAVIOR CLUE

Surfaces who may benefit or be harmed, names competing values and obligations, tests more than one ethical lens, develops alternatives and explains the decision publicly.

8 CONNECTED CAPABILITIES

Ethical Judgment is a system.

Responsible judgment integrates moral attention, reasoning, alternatives, courage and accountability.



Ethical awareness Recognizes moral stakes that convenience can hide.	Framework application Uses principles and ethical lenses appropriately.
Stakeholder inclusion Considers affected people, power and missing voices.	Value weighing Works with competing legitimate values and obligations.
Option generation Creates alternatives beyond accept or reject.	Consequence examination Explores harms, benefits and longer-term effects.
Justification Provides reasons that can be challenged and reviewed.	Moral courage Acts on justified judgment despite pressure or inconvenience.

The components strengthen one another. Development depends on how they are combined in context—not on maximizing one behavior in isolation.

WHY WE PROTECT THIS SKILL

Three signals—three different questions.

H

Human Core

How central should human agency, judgment and responsibility remain?



Human owns

Signal 5/5



Future Readiness

How strongly does this help people learn and act as roles and technology change?



Foundational

Signal 5/5



Safeguard Value

How strongly does this protect capability from over-reliance, deskilling and loss of agency?



**Critical
safeguard**

Signal 5/5

READ THESE AS STRATEGIC SIGNALS

They describe why the capability matters—not how advanced a learner is.

AI can surface considerations and compare frameworks. Humans and institutions must determine what values govern, hear affected people and remain accountable for the choice.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Five stages of responsible judgment.

The progression describes observable ethical attention, reasoning and action - not moral worth, ideological agreement or certainty.



USE THE PROGRESSION WELL

Ask for the next observable behavior—not a label for the person.

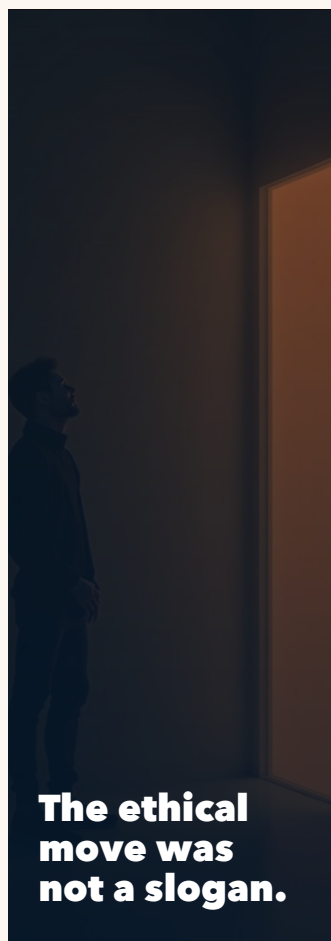
BEHAVIOR MAP

What ethical judgment looks like around a decision.

01 Before Name the decision Clarifies what will change, for whom and by whose authority. Surface the stakes Identifies values, rights, duties and possible harms. Map power Notifies who decides, who benefits and who cannot easily refuse. Invite voice Includes affected perspectives before the path is fixed.	02 During Use several lenses Examines duties, consequences, character, care and justice. Test consistency Asks whether the same principle would apply in comparable cases. Create alternatives Looks for designs that reduce harm and preserve dignity. State uncertainty Separates moral conviction from factual uncertainty.	03 After Explain the choice Makes reasons, authority and trade-offs visible. Monitor impact Checks who actually benefits or carries burden. Provide recourse Creates a route to question, appeal or correct the decision. Repair harm Acts when consequences differ from the ethical intention.
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CASE STORY · COMPOSITE

When the AI shortlist is efficient but unfair.



The challenge. A hiring model produces a high-performing candidate shortlist. A team member notices that applicants with non-linear careers rarely advance, but the vendor cannot fully explain the pattern.

1 • Surface

The team names fairness, transparency, opportunity and efficiency as competing stakes.

2 • Include

They examine who is excluded and invite recruitment, legal and candidate perspectives.

3 • Weigh

Consistency and accuracy are considered alongside rights, structural disadvantage and explainability.

4 • Create

The team tests broader evidence, human review and an appeal route instead of choosing use or ban.

5 • Own

Leadership pauses automated rejection, documents authority and monitors outcomes across groups.

CAPABILITY IN PRACTICE

The ethical move was not a slogan. It changed the design, authority, evidence and recourse around the system.

A PRACTICAL PROTOCOL

Use CARES before commitment.

Use this short structure in real work, reflection or coaching. Keep the action specific enough to observe.

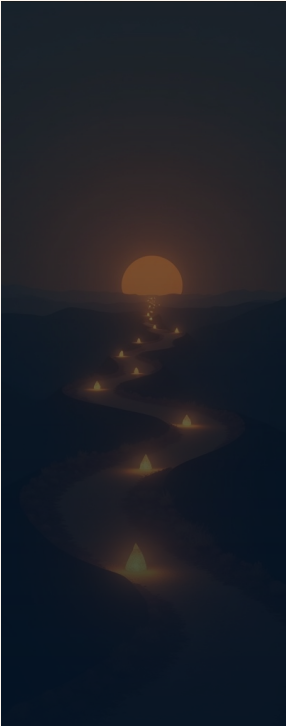
C Context What decision, authority and uncertainty are present?	A Affected Who benefits, carries risk or lacks meaningful voice?	R Rights Which duties, values, rights and relationships must be protected?	E Examine options What alternative reduces harm or reconciles tensions?	S Stand behind it Can we explain, monitor, review and repair this choice?
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One-minute start: "The moral stake is ... The missing voice is ... The responsibility we must keep visible is ..."

The protocol supports practice. It does not remove the need for context, expertise, ethical judgment or appropriate human support.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING CULTURE

Make values operational before pressure decides.



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- MODEL** Explain your reasoning, uncertainty and value trade-offs.
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- INVITE** Bring affected voices and responsible dissent into decisions early.
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- DESIGN** Build ethical checks, recourse and human authority into workflows.
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- PROTECT** Make it safe to raise moral concern without career penalty.
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- REPAIR** Respond transparently when outcomes violate the stated values.
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RESEARCH PULSE · 2022

An integrative review of 40 healthcare studies found ethics education can help professionals and students recognize previously unseen ethical problems and build readiness to respond, while programs varied widely in design.

Andersson et al., BMC Medical Ethics. [R1]

SEVEN-DAY EXPERIMENT

Audit one real dilemma in seven days.

- Day 1** Choose a decision with real effects and write the moral issue in one sentence.
- Day 2** Map affected people, decision power and who may lack voice or recourse.
- Day 3** Name the values, duties, rights and relationships in tension.
- Day 4** Examine the decision through consequence, duty, care, justice and character lenses.
- Day 5** Generate three options, including one that changes the design of the situation.
- Day 6** Write a public justification, uncertainty statement and review condition.
- Day 7** Invite challenge from someone affected and update the decision or safeguards.

MY ETHICAL RECORD

The moral stake:

The missing voice:

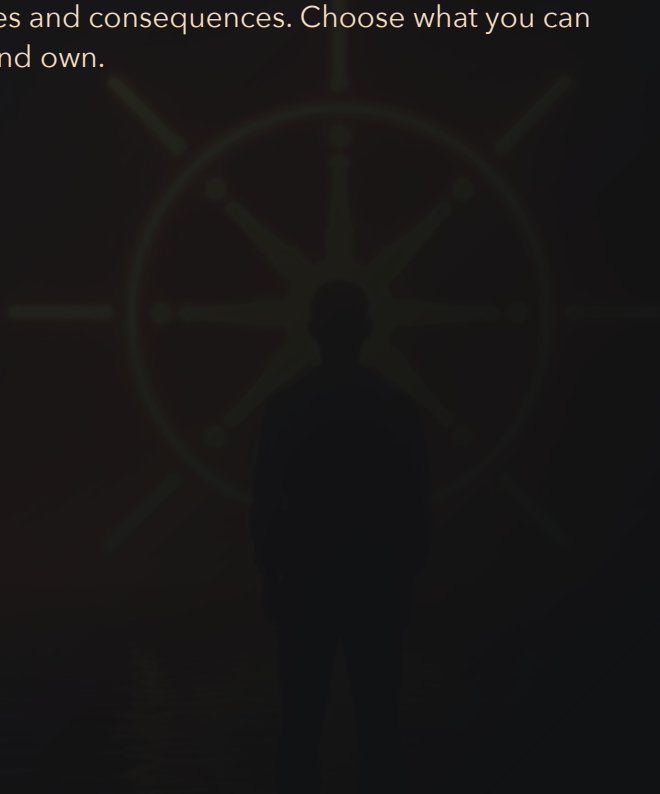
The value tension:

How we will review and repair:

Track behavior and evidence. Reflection matters when it changes the next action.

Possible is not the same as responsible.

Recognize the moral stakes. Include affected people.
Test values and consequences. Choose what you can
explain and own.



About This Material

WHAT THIS IS

This material is part of the Skills Pathfinder learning ecosystem developed by GrowthMindsetBuilder. It presents one or more human skills in a concise, practical format for learning, reflection and training.

It may be used as a standalone learning resource, but it is not a complete course. The broader learning experience—including facilitated activities, practice, feedback and progression—lives within the programmes and client projects from which this material was developed.

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Skills Pathfinder profiles and frameworks synthesize extensive research, international models and established good practices. They bring together multiple perspectives to make complex ideas accessible and useful in real-life learning and development.

No individual model or study provides a complete answer. Skills Pathfinder should therefore be understood as an evidence-informed framework for reflection and growth—not as a universal or final definition of human capability.

RESEARCH NOTES AND SOURCES

Where used, research callouts marked [R1], [R2] and so on provide short summaries of published studies. Each callout identifies the authors and publication so that you can find and examine the original research.

Research on human skills, AI capabilities and future readiness is developing quickly. Findings may differ across people, tasks, technologies and settings—and conclusions that appear settled today may change as new evidence emerges.

Treat each study as one contribution to the evidence rather than a final verdict. Compare perspectives, explore the original sources and form your own view. Where a source is cited, the original publication—not this summary—should be treated as authoritative.

CONTEXTUAL USE

Every skill profile is contextual. Language, terminology, emphasis and interpretation should be adapted to the cultural, educational, professional and organizational setting in which the material is used.

Local knowledge—and the experience of the people using the framework—is essential for making the material relevant, inclusive and effective.

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Reflection tools and self-assessments are intended to support learning and conversation. They are not clinical, psychological or psychometric diagnostic instruments and should not be used as the sole basis for employment, education or other high-stakes decisions.

Unless stated otherwise, case stories are composites created for learning use and do not describe identifiable individuals.

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