ETHICAL TESTS and FRAMEWORKS for DECISION MAKING
(Chapter 8—and Figure 8-2)

The Golden Rule

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
The most universal of all frameworks

Utilitarian

Do what creates the most good for the most people or the least harm.

Kant's Categorical Imperative

Act in such a way that the action taken under the circumstances could be a universal law or rule of behavior—everyone would agree to do it this way.

Principles of Rights

A right is “inalienable” (as stated in the U.S. Constitution) and can only be overridden by a more basic right—but the issue is whose right is right. There are many types of rights claimed.

Principles of Justice

Justice involves the “fair” treatment of each person—problem is agreeing on what is “fair.” There are various types of justice claimed. Rawls’ theory of justice is discussed in the text.

Principles of Caring

Based on feminist theories of relationships.
Virtue Ethics

Based on Plato and Aristotle. Certain things are just in and of themselves to be done such as honesty, fairness, truthfulness, benevolence which lead to building one’s character.

Servant Leadership

Rotary International credo—others before self. You lead by serving others. Ten characteristics of servant leadership are discussed in the text.

The Professional Ethic

Take only those actions that would be viewed as being proper by a disinterested panel of your professional colleagues (doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc). Just because a profession has a code of ethics, it does not mean that everyone in that profession will observe it.

The TV Test (60 Minutes Test, Going Public)

Would you feel comfortable explaining your actions to a national television audience, or on the front page of your local newspaper, or to your family and friends?

Test of Common Sense

Try to stand back and determine if what you are contemplating makes logical sense—what are the practical implications. This does not mean that anything is legal until you get caught.

Test of One’s Best Self

Assumes you hold yourself in high self esteem and would do nothing to endanger that personal perception of self.
Test of Ventilation

If you discussed your proposed action with others whose opinions you value, what would they think of it? A potential problem for those in leadership positions who do this is group think a la the children’s story of the emperor’s new clothes.

Test of the Purified Idea

Are you being asked to do something that you find questionable by someone with authority over you who is telling you that it is OK (i.e., it is purified because I say so)?

Gag Test

Does what you are being asked to do make you gag?

Situational Ethics

Do your actions conform to the local conventional wisdom (i.e., When in Rome, do as the Romans)?

Machiavellian Ethics

You rationalize by saying that the ends justify the means.

There is nothing wrong with combining several of these as discussed in the text.