

The Stages of Moral Reasoning

stages	Stage 0: Egocentric Reasoning (preschool years – around age 4)	Stage 1: Unquestioning Obedience (around kindergarten age)	Stage 2: “What’s-in-it-for-me” Reasoning (early elementary grades)	Stage 3: Interpersonal Conformity (middle-to-upper ele- mentary grades and early-to-mid teens)	Stage 4: Responsibility to “The System” (high school years or late teens)	Stage 5: Principled Conscience (young adulthood)
what’s right	I should get my own way.	I should do what I’m told.	I should look out for myself but be fair to those who are fair to me.	I should be a nice per- son and live up to the expectations of people I know and care about.	I should fulfill my respon- sibilities to the social or value system I feel part of.	I should show the greatest possible respect for the rights and dignity of every person and should support a system that protects human rights.
reason to be good	To get rewards and avoid punishments	To stay out of trouble.	Self-interest. What’s in it for me?	So others will think well of me.	To keep the system from falling apart and to main- tain self-respect...(to) meet obligations .	The obligation of con- science to act in accor- dance with the principle of respect for all human beings.

Lickona, Thomas. Raising Good Children: From Birth Through the Teenage Years. New York: Bantam Books, 1985.