



**karuna**  
dedicated holistic support

*the kindest care*

## Care of the mind

# Buddhist ethics

The practice of ethics not only focuses on your behaviour - it also involves the intention to guard your mind - what you do or avoid doing with your body, speech and mind.

Due to the law of cause and effect every action we do with our body, speech and mind will bring its own result. The Buddhist theory of karma is that actions motivated by negative states of mind like anger and attachment cause suffering, while actions motivated by positive states of mind like kindness and compassion cause happiness.

Ethical behaviour involves avoiding negative actions that lead to suffering and choosing positive actions that result in happiness.

### The benefit of ethics

When we behave ethically:

- our mind is more clear and calm
- we have a greater sense of self worth
- we gain strength and stability of mind
- we have direction and purpose in life and a framework by which to live
- people feel more comfortable around us and want to be in our presence

### Types of ethics

There are three types of ethics described in the Buddhist teachings:

**1. The Ethics of restraint** - being aware of an opportunity to act negatively but intentionally deciding to restrain from acting this way. For example, stopping yourself from lying, killing, stealing, criticising others or speaking harshly to someone.

Some negative actions listed in the Buddhist teachings are taking the life of another being, stealing from others, sexual misconduct (e.g. adultery), deceiving others through lying, and using our speech to hurt others or create disharmony.

The ethics of restraint can also be practiced by making a commitment to avoid certain negative actions such as vowing not to criticise a particular person again or if that is difficult, refraining for a week or even for a day.

Because of the ethics of restraint those we find difficult to be with are our best teachers. Those who criticise, blame or even harm us give us the best opportunity to practice restraint in our thoughts, words and actions.

## Care of the mind

**2.The Ethics of virtue** - intentionally enhancing positive states of mind and creating positive physical and verbal actions. This includes being generous, being kind, behaving morally, being patient and developing wisdom. It also includes practices such as meditation, reading inspirational and trustworthy teachings, reciting prayers and mantras that enhance positive mental qualities and counteract negative emotions.

**3.The Ethics of benefiting others** - cherishing others by helping them be happy and/or alleviating their suffering. Actions that benefit others are usually motivated by love or compassion such as caring for those who are sick or injured, helping those faced with hardship or misery, speaking kindly and respecting others and rejoicing in others' good fortune. This form of ethics can be practiced every moment of every day as it includes the quality of our interactions with everyone we encounter.

The more we practice ethics, the more we create causes for future happiness and positive future rebirths.

**Karuna also has experienced people you can talk with on:  
07 3632 8300 or [karuna@karuna.org.au](mailto:karuna@karuna.org.au)**



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