



## ELA Virtues of Ethical Leadership Quick Reference Guide 3.1

How do we develop as ethical leaders? What core skills and ideas make us effective at empowering others to improve the world? This model by Ethical Leaders in Action (ELA) combines ancient concepts with modern terminology and situations as a framework for leadership development and discussion.

Aristotle (among others) observed that people flourish by cultivating certain traits, which he called *arete*, translated as “virtues.” These virtues encompass a wide range of qualities: moral and practical, public and private. These virtues function together, so an excellent human being must exhibit the full set of virtues to some degree. This account of character development stands as an enduring and influential part of the Western philosophical tradition.

This set of virtues focuses on *ethical leadership*, which we describe as *empowering others to improve the world*. Our intent is for this virtue model to resonate with people of many cultures and backgrounds, perhaps with some level of translation or adaptation.

Each virtue includes aspects of both motivation and capability – both “will” and “skill.” We develop virtues through action, practice, and reflection, alone and especially in relationships with others. The following virtues are essential to ethical leadership (See descriptions and definitions on reverse side):



The Virtues of Ethical Leadership rests on a foundation of excellent work by others, from ancient philosophers like Aristotle (who articulated a potent and enduring virtue set around 300 BCE) to contemporary thinkers like Peter Koestenbaum (whose similar model, called the *Leadership Diamond*, crystallizes around a commitment to greatness). As important, the model is informed by the real-life experiences of the leaders who use it every day. Please share your thoughts and comments with us.

<b>Virtues</b>	<b>Features</b>	<b>Feature Definitions</b>
<b>Service</b>		
Service is the desire and ability to work with others toward a worthy purpose. It describes the core motives of an ethical leader, striving and enabling others to achieve positive outcomes.	Altruism	the belief in and practice of selfless concern for others
	Empathy	the capacity to understand and share the feelings of another
	Justice	a commitment to fairness, respect, and upholding the rights of others
<b>Competence</b>		
Competence is command of relevant knowledge and skills. It includes specific information and knowhow, along with practical wisdom and sound judgment. It also includes more general leadership competencies, such as communication.	Knowledge	information and skill from experience and education
	Wisdom	appreciation and understanding of essence and meaning
	Judgement	the capacity to form an opinion or make a decision after careful thought
<b>Creativity</b>		
Creativity drives us to build, to improve, and to solve problems. It features a desire for improvement and the capacities to generate possibilities and to create solutions.	Imagination	the capacity to think of new things
	Problem Solving	the ability to understand and develop solutions to problems
	Drive	a strong desire for achievement
<b>Clarity</b>		
Clarity helps us to see and share what is truly important. It includes the capacities to craft and share vision, as well as to discern and evaluate reality. It also encompasses moral clarity with respect to our individual and shared values.	Vision	the capacity to see and describe a compelling picture of the future
	Discernment	the ability to observe and understand people, things, or situations clearly
	Morality	the capacity to embrace values and to make value based decisions
<b>Courage</b>		
Courage is the capacity to do what is right in the face of danger or difficulties. Courage enables us to overcome our fears in order to pursue our duties, and to act in accordance with our values and commitments.	Integrity	honesty, consistency, and the thoughtful alignment of one's commitments, words, and deeds
	Bravery	the capacity to take risks and to act truly despite one's fears
	Tenacity	persistence and endurance in the face of adversity

The Virtues of Ethical Leadership Self-Inventory (VELSI) is available free of charge at  
<https://ethinact.com/velsi>

For information on The Virtues of Ethical Leadership Feedback Assessment (VELFA) contact  
[publishing@ethinact.com](mailto:publishing@ethinact.com).

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