

PEOPLE LEADERSHIP | ETHICS | ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY

RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT:

# AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

## FOR PEOPLE LEADERS

*A Comprehensive Guide to Values-Driven Leadership,  
Moral Decision-Making & Accountable People Management*

**87%**

Leaders Cite Ethics  
as Key Trust Driver

**3.2x**

Higher Retention in  
Ethical Cultures

**71%**

Employees More  
Engaged Under Ethical Mgrs

*"Management is not about controlling people. It is about serving them."*

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## FOREWORD

# Why Ethical Leadership Is Not Optional

In an era defined by rapid change, growing employee expectations, and intense public scrutiny of organizational behavior, one truth stands immovable: the quality of management is ultimately a moral question. How leaders treat people — in hiring, in daily interactions, in performance conversations, in moments of crisis — determines not only the health of their teams but the integrity of the organization itself.

Responsible management is not a soft competency. It is the bedrock of sustainable performance. Research consistently shows that ethical leadership drives higher engagement, lower turnover, stronger innovation, and greater customer trust. Conversely, unethical management — even when legally permissible — erodes culture, destroys psychological safety, and ultimately undermines the very results leaders are charged with delivering.

***"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant." — Max De Pree***

This guide was written for people leaders at every level — from frontline supervisors managing their first team to senior executives shaping organizational culture at scale. It offers a practical, evidence-based ethical framework grounded in decades of leadership research, moral philosophy, and real-world application.

You will find here not a list of rules to comply with, but a set of principles to live by. Ethics in management cannot be reduced to a compliance checklist. It must be cultivated as a habit of mind — a reflexive commitment to treating every person in your care with fairness, dignity, and respect.

**87%**

Leaders Cite Ethics as Top Trust Driver

**3.2x**

Higher Retention in Ethical Cultures

**71%**

More Engaged Under Ethical Managers

**62%**

Higher Innovation in Psychologically Safe Teams

## CHAPTER 1

# The Foundations of Responsible Management

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Responsible management begins with a deceptively simple question: What do I owe the people I lead? The answer, when pursued with intellectual honesty, reveals a rich and demanding set of obligations — obligations that extend far beyond hitting quarterly targets or maintaining team productivity.

## Defining Responsible Management

Responsible management is the consistent practice of exercising leadership authority in ways that respect the dignity, rights, and legitimate interests of all stakeholders — employees, colleagues, customers, and the broader community. It integrates three dimensions that ethical frameworks have long distinguished:

- **Compliance:** Meeting the minimum legal and regulatory standards governing employment, safety, and fair treatment.
- **Integrity:** Acting consistently with stated values and principles, even when no one is watching and when doing so is personally costly.
- **Excellence:** Actively pursuing the highest standard of ethical conduct — not merely avoiding harm, but proactively creating conditions in which people flourish.

Most organizations achieve compliance. Fewer sustain integrity. The finest organizations — and the finest managers — pursue excellence.

***Responsible management is not the absence of poor decisions. It is a sustained orientation toward the wellbeing of every person in your care.***

## The Manager's Sphere of Influence

People managers wield extraordinary influence over the lives of those they lead. This influence operates across multiple dimensions simultaneously: economic (compensation, promotion, job security), psychological (identity, belonging, confidence), social (relationships, reputation, inclusion), and developmental (skills, career trajectory, opportunities).

Understanding the full scope of this influence is the first step toward exercising it responsibly. The manager who fails to recognize the asymmetry of power between themselves and their reports — and

who therefore treats authority as a neutral administrative function — is already operating irresponsibly, regardless of their intentions.

DOMAIN OF INFLUENCE	HOW MANAGERS SHAPE IT
Economic Security	Compensation decisions, promotion recommendations, redundancy choices
Psychological Safety	Feedback tone, meeting culture, response to failure and vulnerability
Social Belonging	Inclusion in conversations, team rituals, recognition visibility
Career Development	Stretch assignments, sponsorship, learning investment
Daily Experience	Workload, autonomy, flexibility, relationship quality

## CHAPTER 2

# Core Ethical Principles for People Leaders

Ethical leadership is not monolithic — it draws on multiple philosophical traditions, each of which illuminates a different dimension of what it means to lead responsibly. The most effective ethical leaders integrate insights from all of these traditions rather than dogmatically adhering to a single framework.

## The Five Core Principles

- **1. Respect for Persons (Dignity):** Every individual has inherent worth that must not be instrumentalized. People are not resources to be optimized — they are ends in themselves. This Kantian principle demands that managers never treat employees purely as means to organizational outcomes, regardless of performance pressure or business imperatives.
- **2. Fairness (Justice):** Similar cases should be treated similarly. Favoritism, inconsistency, and arbitrary differentiation in how policies are applied corrode trust and signal that some people matter more than others. Fairness does not require identical treatment — it requires principled, transparent, and consistently applied criteria.
- **3. Beneficence (Care):** Managers have an affirmative obligation not merely to avoid harm but to actively promote the wellbeing of those in their care. This goes beyond legal duty to encompass genuine concern for physical, psychological, and professional flourishing.
- **4. Non-Maleficence (Do No Harm):** The most fundamental ethical obligation is to refrain from actions that cause unnecessary harm. In management contexts, this includes micromanagement that destroys autonomy, public humiliation that damages dignity, and exclusion that erodes belonging.
- **5. Autonomy:** People have the right to make meaningful choices about their work — how it is done, when, with whom, and toward what ends. Ethical managers maximize autonomy consistent with legitimate organizational needs. They build ownership, not dependency.

*"Ethics is not about following rules. It is about taking seriously the interests of the people who are affected by your decisions."*

## Virtue Ethics: The Character of the Ethical Manager

Beyond principles and frameworks, ethical management requires the cultivation of moral character — the stable dispositions that make ethical behavior not merely a deliberate choice but a natural

expression of who the leader is. Aristotle's virtue ethics identifies several character traits essential to excellent leadership:

VIRTUE	MANAGEMENT APPLICATION
Courage	Giving honest feedback, raising uncomfortable truths, defending team members
Justice	Distributing work, recognition, and opportunity equitably
Temperance	Managing emotional reactions; not weaponizing authority when frustrated
Practical Wisdom	Knowing the right action in complex, ambiguous situations
Honesty	Communicating truthfully even when the truth is inconvenient
Compassion	Genuine responsiveness to the hardships and struggles of team members

## CHAPTER 3

# Fairness, Equity & Inclusive Leadership

Of all the ethical obligations a manager carries, few are more consequential — or more frequently violated — than the obligation to fairness. Employees who perceive their manager as unfair experience dramatically higher stress, lower engagement, and significantly greater intention to leave. Yet fairness is also one of the most misunderstood concepts in management practice.

## Equality vs. Equity: A Critical Distinction

Equality means giving everyone the same thing. Equity means giving people what they need to succeed. Ethical management requires equity — not equality. A manager who provides the same level of support to a newly promoted team member and a ten-year veteran is not being fair; they are ignoring genuine differences in need that, unaddressed, will perpetuate disadvantage.

***Treating everyone identically is not fairness — it is the appearance of fairness that often perpetuates existing inequalities. True equity requires seeing people as individuals.***

## Procedural vs. Distributive Fairness

Research in organizational justice identifies two distinct dimensions of fairness that people care deeply about:

- **Procedural Fairness:** Was the process used to make the decision fair, transparent, and consistent? Did I have a voice? Were the criteria applied the same way to everyone? People often accept unfavorable outcomes more readily when they trust the process that produced them.
- **Distributive Fairness:** Was the outcome itself fair? Did I receive appropriate recognition, compensation, and opportunity relative to my contribution and relative to my peers?

Managers who consistently explain their decision-making criteria, invite input before finalizing decisions, and apply standards consistently across their team build the kind of procedural fairness that sustains trust even through difficult moments.

## Inclusive Leadership in Practice

Inclusive leadership requires active, deliberate effort — not passive non-discrimination. Research by Deloitte identifies six signature traits of inclusive leaders: commitment, courage, cognizance of bias,

curiosity, cultural intelligence, and collaboration. Of these, cognizance of bias — the ability to recognize and mitigate the effects of one's own unconscious preferences — is both the most important and the most challenging.

- Audit your patterns: Who do you give the most stretch assignments to? Who speaks most in your meetings? Whose ideas do you amplify versus let pass?
- Create structured inclusion mechanisms: Round-robin input, pre-meeting written contributions, and rotating facilitation roles reduce the dominance of the loudest voices.
- Sponsor, not just mentor: Mentors give advice; sponsors use their social capital to create opportunities. Ethical managers are sponsors for those whose voices are underrepresented.

## CHAPTER 4

# Psychological Safety & Duty of Care

The concept of psychological safety — the shared belief that it is safe to take interpersonal risks without fear of embarrassment, punishment, or rejection — has become one of the most researched and cited concepts in organizational behavior. Amy Edmondson's foundational research at Harvard, and Google's subsequent Project Aristotle study, established psychological safety as the single most important factor distinguishing high-performing teams from their peers.

## The Manager's Duty of Care

Legal frameworks in most jurisdictions impose a duty of care on employers to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees. But the ethical duty of care extends well beyond legal minimums. It encompasses the manager's responsibility to actively create conditions in which every team member can bring their full capability to their work without suffering unnecessary harm to their identity, dignity, or mental health.

The duty of care manifests in multiple dimensions of management practice:

- **Workload Management:** Chronic overload is not a sign of a high-performing team — it is a management failure. Ethical managers monitor workload distribution, address unsustainable demands, and resist the cultural pressure to treat burnout as a badge of honor.
- **Conflict Management:** Interpersonal conflict, left unaddressed, creates toxic environments that disproportionately harm those with less organizational power. Managers who ignore conflict in the name of 'letting the team sort it out' are abdicating a fundamental duty.
- **Mental Health Awareness:** The stigma around mental health in workplace settings remains powerful. Ethical managers create conditions where people feel safe to disclose struggle, and they respond to disclosure with compassion, flexibility, and appropriate referral to professional resources.
- **Physical Safety:** In environments with physical risk, the manager's duty of care includes ensuring that safety protocols are never compromised under performance or cost pressure.

*Psychological safety is not about being nice. It is about creating conditions where honest, courageous, uncomfortable conversations can happen — because that is where growth and great work live.*

## Creating Psychological Safety: Practical Actions

ACTION	HOW TO DO IT
Model vulnerability	Share your own mistakes, uncertainties, and learning publicly
Reward speaking up	Explicitly thank people who raise concerns, even when inconvenient
Separate safety from agreement	Disagreement is welcomed; personal attacks are not
No-blame retrospectives	Focus on systems and processes, not individual fault
Acknowledge power dynamics	Name the asymmetry and actively counteract it

## CHAPTER 5

# Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks

Managers make hundreds of decisions every week — most of them quickly, with incomplete information, under competing pressures. Building ethical decision-making capability means developing robust mental frameworks that can be applied swiftly in the moments that matter most.

## The Three-Lens Framework

The Three-Lens Framework draws on three major traditions in moral philosophy to evaluate decisions from multiple perspectives simultaneously:

- **Lens 1 — Consequences (Utilitarian):** What are the likely outcomes of this decision? Who will benefit and who will be harmed? How significant are the harms and benefits? This lens demands a rigorous accounting of real-world effects, not merely intended ones.
- **Lens 2 — Rights and Duties (Deontological):** Does this decision respect the rights and dignity of all affected parties? Am I fulfilling my duties — to my employer, my team, my profession? Are there principles I would be violating that should be non-negotiable regardless of consequences?
- **Lens 3 — Character (Virtue Ethics):** What would a person of excellent character do in this situation? What decision would I be proud to own publicly? Does this choice reflect the leader I aspire to be?

The power of the Three-Lens Framework is not that it always produces clear answers — ethical dilemmas are genuine dilemmas precisely because reasonable people applying good-faith reasoning disagree. Its power is that it forces a richer analysis than any single perspective allows.

***The Newspaper Test: Would you be comfortable if your decision appeared on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper? If not — that discomfort deserves your full attention.***

## The ETHICS Decision-Making Process

STEP	DESCRIPTION
E — Examine	Define the ethical issue clearly. Who is affected? What is at stake?

T — Think Through	Apply the Three Lenses: consequences, rights/duties, character
H — Hear Other Views	Consult trusted colleagues; surface perspectives you may have missed
I — Identify Options	Generate at least three courses of action, including uncomfortable ones
C — Choose & Commit	Select the most defensible option and own the decision fully
S — Scrutinize Outcome	Review what happened; adjust mental models for future decisions

## Navigating Ethical Grey Areas

The most challenging management decisions are not between right and wrong — they are between two competing rights, or two unavoidable harms. Classic ethical tensions in management include: the employee who needs to be managed out versus the welfare of their family; the confidential information that, if shared, would help a struggling team member; the instructions from senior leadership that conflict with the manager's own ethical judgment.

In grey areas, the ethical manager applies three additional tests: the Reversibility Test (could I undo this decision if I discovered I was wrong?), the Universalizability Test (would I want all managers in similar situations to make the same choice?), and the Stakeholder Test (have I genuinely considered all affected parties, not just the most powerful ones?).

## CHAPTER 6

## Power, Influence & Avoiding Abuse

Power is inherent in the management role. The question is never whether a manager has power — they always do — but whether they use it wisely, proportionately, and in service of those they lead rather than at their expense.

### The Five Bases of Managerial Power

French and Raven's classic taxonomy identifies five sources of power available to managers, each with distinct ethical implications:

POWER TYPE	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Legitimate Power	Authority granted by organizational role. Ethical when used within appropriate scope.
Reward Power	Ability to grant benefits. Ethical when applied fairly, transparently, and merit-based.
Coercive Power	Ability to punish. Highest ethical risk — easily abused, quickly destroys trust.
Expert Power	Technical knowledge and competence. Generally ethical; erodes when misrepresented.
Referent Power	Personal admiration and identification. Ethical when authentic; manipulative when performed.

### Warning Signs of Power Abuse

Power abuse in management rarely announces itself dramatically. It accumulates through a series of small decisions — a dismissive comment here, a withheld opportunity there — that individually seem minor but collectively constitute a pattern of harm. Ethical managers cultivate vigilance about these warning signs in their own behavior:

- Making decisions about team members based on personal affinity rather than performance criteria.
- Using access to information asymmetrically — sharing selectively to maintain control rather than to enable performance.

- Leveraging team members' economic vulnerability to extract compliance with unreasonable demands.
- Responding to challenge, disagreement, or feedback with retaliatory behavior — however subtle.
- Claiming credit for team members' ideas or contributions, whether deliberately or through passive omission.

***The ethical use of power is always in service of those subject to it — not the reverse. Power that serves the manager rather than the team is power being abused.***

CHAPTER 7

# Transparent Communication & Honest Feedback

Communication is the medium through which management ethics becomes visible. Every conversation a manager has — every performance review, every one-on-one, every team meeting — is an ethical act. The choices about what to say, how to say it, and what to withhold all carry moral weight.

## The Ethics of Honest Communication

Honesty in management communication is not simply about factual accuracy. It encompasses three distinct obligations:

- **Truthfulness:** Communicating what you sincerely believe to be true — not distorting facts to manage someone's reaction, to avoid a difficult conversation, or to serve your own interests.
- **Transparency:** Sharing information that people have a legitimate interest in knowing — not hoarding information that would enable them to make better decisions about their own work and careers.
- **Non-Deception:** Avoiding the creation of false impressions through technically true statements, misleading framing, selective emphasis, or strategic omission. The letter of truth can still violate its spirit.

## Radical Candor: The Ethical Feedback Standard

Kim Scott's Radical Candor framework offers one of the clearest ethical maps for feedback conversations. Candor without care — what Scott calls 'Obnoxious Aggression' — is technically honest but ethically deficient: it treats truth-telling as license to harm. Kindness without candor — 'Ruinous Empathy' — fails the person by prioritizing the manager's comfort over the employee's genuine need for honest developmental input.

Radical Candor demands both: challenge directly AND care personally. This combination is simultaneously the most ethical and the most developmentally effective approach to feedback. It treats the person as capable of growth, deserving of truth, and worthy of genuine care.

FEEDBACK STYLE	ETHICAL ASSESSMENT
Radical Candor	High Care + High Challenge = Ethical ideal; most growth-producing

Ruinous Empathy	High Care + Low Challenge = Dishonest kindness; fails the person
Obnoxious Aggression	Low Care + High Challenge = Honest but harmful; damages trust
Manipulative Insincerity	Low Care + Low Challenge = Neither honest nor kind; toxic

## Communicating Difficult Truths

The most ethically challenging communication situations involve delivering truths that the recipient does not want to hear: under-performance assessments, role elimination, significant behavioral feedback, or organizational decisions that will negatively affect someone's life. Ethical managers do not avoid these conversations — avoidance is itself an ethical failure. They approach them with preparation, compassion, and unwavering honesty.

Key principles: be direct and specific, not vague; focus on observed behavior and impact, not character or personality; create private space for the conversation; allow genuine time for response; and follow up with support, not surveillance.

## CHAPTER 8

# Diversity, Dignity & Anti-Discrimination

The ethical obligation to treat every person with dignity — regardless of their background, identity, or demographic characteristics — is both morally foundational and legally mandated in most jurisdictions. Yet discrimination and exclusion persist in organizations not primarily through explicit bigotry but through unconscious bias, systemic disadvantage, and the cumulative effect of small daily interactions that signal belonging or exclusion.

## Understanding Bias in Management Practice

Research in cognitive psychology has documented dozens of biases that systematically distort management judgment. Four are particularly consequential for people leaders:

- **Affinity Bias:** The tendency to favor people who are similar to ourselves in background, communication style, or social identity. Left unaddressed, affinity bias reproduces existing demographic patterns in hiring, promotion, and opportunity allocation.
- **Attribution Bias:** The tendency to attribute the failures of out-group members to character ('she is not strategic enough') while attributing the failures of in-group members to circumstances ('he had a difficult quarter'). This double standard systematically disadvantages those already facing structural headwinds.
- **Halo/Horn Effects:** Allowing one outstanding quality — or one significant flaw — to color overall assessment in ways that ignore more comprehensive evidence.
- **Recency Bias:** Overweighting recent events in performance assessment while discounting consistent contributions over time — often disadvantaging those who had a difficult period near evaluation time.

***You cannot eliminate bias — it is a feature of human cognition. You can, however, design processes that reduce its impact. Structure your decisions; audit your patterns; invite challenge to your assessments.***

## Creating a Culture of Dignity

Beyond anti-discrimination compliance, ethical managers actively create cultures in which every person experiences genuine dignity — the sense of being seen, valued, and respected as a full human being. This requires:

- Intervening immediately and directly when derogatory language, exclusionary behavior, or disrespectful conduct occurs — regardless of the seniority of the perpetrator.
- Creating naming conventions, communication norms, and space design that signal belonging for people of all backgrounds.
- Actively educating oneself about the experiences of those whose identities differ from one's own — not outsourcing this education to marginalized team members.
- Examining and restructuring processes — hiring rubrics, performance templates, promotion criteria — that may embed historical bias even when decision-makers have good intentions.

## CHAPTER 9

# Whistleblowing, Integrity & Moral Courage

Ethical management is tested most severely not in comfortable times but in moments of institutional pressure — when organizational culture, managerial hierarchy, or business interests push in directions that conflict with what the manager knows to be right. Moral courage is the capacity to act according to ethical conviction even when doing so is personally costly.

## The Duty to Speak Up

Silence in the face of wrongdoing is rarely neutral. When managers observe unethical behavior — whether in their own teams, from peers, or from senior leaders — silence becomes complicity. The ethical obligation to speak up operates at three levels:

- **Direct challenge:** When witnessing behavior that directly violates ethical standards, the manager's first obligation is to challenge it directly — privately, respectfully, and with specific reference to the relevant standard or value being violated.
- **Internal escalation:** When direct challenge is ineffective, insufficient, or unsafe, escalation through formal channels — HR, ethics hotlines, compliance functions, senior leadership — becomes both a right and a responsibility.
- **External reporting (whistleblowing):** When internal channels have failed or are complicit in the wrongdoing, whistleblowing — disclosure to external regulators, law enforcement, or in serious cases the media — may be both legally protected and ethically required.

***The opposite of moral courage is moral disengagement — the psychological process by which ordinarily ethical people convince themselves that harmful actions are acceptable. Ethical managers recognize and resist this process in themselves.***

## Protecting Psychological Safety for Reporters

One of the most important things an ethical manager can do is actively protect the psychological safety of those who raise concerns. This means: thanking people explicitly for flagging issues regardless of outcome; ensuring that no retaliation — formal or informal — results from good-faith reporting; following up on concerns to demonstrate that they were genuinely heard; and creating structural mechanisms (anonymous reporting, ethics ombudspersons, regular ethics conversations) that do not require individual courage to activate.

## When You Are Asked to Act Unethically

Every manager will eventually face pressure from above to do something that conflicts with their ethical convictions — distort a performance assessment, deny a reasonable accommodation, obscure information from a team member, or participate in a hiring process they believe to be discriminatory. The ethical response to such pressure requires both clarity of principle and strategic sophistication about how to raise objection effectively within hierarchical structures.

Key strategies include: buying time to consult trusted advisors; framing objections in business-risk terms as well as ethical terms; escalating through multiple channels simultaneously; documenting concerns in writing; and if none of these strategies prove effective, seriously considering whether continued participation in the situation is ethically permissible.

## CHAPTER 10

# Building an Ethical Team Culture

Individual ethics, however admirable, is insufficient. The most ethical manager operating within a team culture that normalizes unethical behavior will either be isolated and marginalized or gradually eroded by the social pressure to conform. Sustainable ethical behavior requires ethical culture — shared norms, rituals, and expectations that make ethical conduct the path of least resistance rather than the path of greatest courage.

## The Ethical Culture Pyramid

Ethical team cultures are built from the bottom up through three layers of increasingly explicit norm-setting:

- **Foundation — Modeled Behavior:** The manager's own conduct sets the floor. Every ethical commitment that managers make but do not personally model becomes a cynical joke within weeks. Culture is downstream of behavior, not aspiration.
- **Middle — Reinforced Norms:** What gets rewarded, celebrated, and called out shapes team norms far more powerfully than any stated value. Ethical cultures reward integrity explicitly — recognizing the team member who flagged a concern, celebrating the decision that sacrificed short-term gain for long-term right action.
- **Apex — Structural Design:** Processes, decision rights, and accountability mechanisms that make ethical behavior the structurally incentivized path. Incentive systems that reward outcomes regardless of how they were achieved systematically erode ethical culture however strong the stated values.

***Culture is not what you say you stand for. It is what behaviors you reward, what you tolerate, and what you refuse to accept — demonstrated consistently over time.***

## Team Ethics Practices

Concrete practices that build ethical culture at the team level include:

- **Ethics retrospectives:** Monthly or quarterly conversations explicitly focused on how the team made difficult decisions and whether those decisions reflected the team's stated values.

- **Values anchoring in decisions:** The practice of explicitly naming which value a significant decision is serving — and noting when values are in tension.
- **Psychological safety audits:** Regular team assessments of whether all voices are heard, whether concerns can be raised without fear, and whether diversity of perspective is genuinely valued.
- **Ethical dilemma discussions:** Deliberately surfacing and discussing hypothetical or real ethical challenges the team faces — building shared frameworks before pressure makes deliberation impossible.
- **Accountability without blame:** Distinguishing between consequences that serve learning and development versus consequences that serve punishment — and structuring accountability conversations accordingly.

78%

Teams With Ethics Rituals Report  
Higher Trust

2.4x

More Likely to Report Concerns Early

65%

Lower Misconduct in High-Safety  
Teams

## CHAPTER 11

# The Responsible Manager's Self-Assessment

Self-knowledge is the foundation of ethical growth. Managers who lack insight into their own biases, emotional triggers, power dynamics, and ethical blind spots cannot reliably act ethically regardless of their good intentions. This self-assessment is designed to surface your most important areas for ethical development.

## The 15-Point Ethical Leadership Inventory

Rate yourself honestly on each dimension (1 = Never / 2 = Rarely / 3 = Sometimes / 4 = Usually / 5 = Consistently). Be ruthlessly honest — this instrument only has value if you resist self-inflation.

DIMENSION	ASSESSMENT CRITERION
1. Dignity & Respect	I treat every team member with consistent dignity regardless of performance or personal affinity.
2. Fairness	I apply the same standards, criteria, and opportunities to all team members consistently.
3. Transparency	I share information people have a legitimate interest in knowing, even when it is uncomfortable.
4. Honest Feedback	I give specific, timely, honest feedback even when the conversation will be difficult.
5. Psychological Safety	My team members feel genuinely safe to speak up, disagree, and admit mistakes.
6. Power Awareness	I am conscious of the power differential between myself and my reports and actively work to reduce its misuse.
7. Bias Vigilance	I actively examine my own patterns for evidence of bias in assignments, feedback, and promotion.
8. Duty of Care	I monitor team wellbeing and intervene when workload, conflict, or distress crosses acceptable thresholds.

9. Moral Courage	I speak up when I observe unethical behavior, even when the perpetrator is senior to me.
10. Inclusive Practice	I actively create conditions where people of all backgrounds can fully contribute and belong.
11. Accountability	I own my mistakes publicly, apologize genuinely, and change my behavior demonstrably.
12. Development Equity	I invest development resources equitably, not exclusively in those who remind me of myself.
13. Structural Ethics	I actively examine team processes and incentive systems for unintended ethical consequences.
14. Emotional Regulation	I manage my emotional reactions under pressure, not weaponizing authority when frustrated.
15. Values Consistency	My behavior under pressure is consistent with my stated values — I do not compromise integrity for convenience.

**Scoring Guide:** 65–75 = Ethical Leader. 50–64 = High Potential. 35–49 = Significant Development Needed. Below 35 = Urgent Ethics Coaching Required. Share your three lowest scores with a trusted mentor or coach. Make them your leadership development priorities for the next 90 days.

## APPENDIX

# Ethical Frameworks Reference & Further Reading

## Quick Reference: Ethical Frameworks for Managers

FRAMEWORK	MANAGEMENT APPLICATION
Utilitarianism (Mill)	Choose the action producing the greatest good for the greatest number. Best for policy decisions with broad stakeholder impact.
Deontology (Kant)	Act only according to principles you could will to be universal laws. Focus on duties, rights, and categorical obligations.
Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)	Ask: what would a person of excellent character do? Focus on developing stable dispositions of ethical conduct.
Care Ethics (Noddings)	Center relationships and responsibilities to specific others. Particularly relevant to people management and team dynamics.
Contractualism (Rawls)	Design decisions as if behind a 'veil of ignorance' — without knowing which role you will occupy. Powerful for fairness questions.
Stakeholder Theory	Identify all parties affected by decisions; balance their legitimate interests. Prevents narrowly self-serving choices.

## Essential Reading for Ethical People Leaders

TITLE & AUTHOR	ETHICAL FOCUS
'Dare to Lead' — Brené Brown	Courageous, values-driven leadership and the vulnerability required to lead ethically.

'Radical Candor' — Kim Scott	The ethical and practical case for honest, caring feedback in management.
'The Fearless Organization' — Amy Edmondson	Building psychological safety and ethical team cultures.
'Good Authority' — Jonathan Raymond	Integrating personal development and ethical responsibility in management.
'An Everyone Culture' — Kegan & Lahey	The deliberately developmental organization and its ethical foundations.
'Leadership and Self-Deception' — Arbinger	How managers rationalize unethical treatment and how to escape that pattern.
'The Responsible Company' — Chouinard & Stanley	Expanding ethical responsibility beyond the team to organizational and social dimensions.

***"The measure of a manager is not what they accomplish alone. It is what they make possible in the people they have the privilege to lead."***

This guide represents a beginning, not an endpoint. Ethical leadership is not a destination — it is a daily practice, a lifelong commitment to showing up for the people in your care with integrity, courage, and genuine respect for their dignity and potential. The work is never finished. The obligation is never discharged. And the impact, sustained over a career of responsible management, is immeasurable.