



## How to be a good person

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Pharmacists encounter morally sound and morally questionable people, patients or clients on a regular basis. By the same token, pharmacists are measured against the very same criteria defining our morality in turn. Despite the people we deal with, I am convinced that most pharmacists aspire to be morally supportive. As ethical professionals, we expect of ourselves and our peers to possess the innate ability to distinguish between good or bad, or rather being good or being bad. Although this basic value system is finely woven into society, despite our cultural frame of reference, it can be somewhat of a challenge to recognise what defines a good person and how to actively steer towards being a good person.

### Being good is not a goal in and of itself

Modern day philosophers defend virtue ethics, which focuses on one's moral character. Cardinal virtues that include courage, justice, temperance (moderation or restraint) and wisdom, are meant to guide our decision-making processes. Seen differently, a person who possesses these qualities might be considered objectively "good."

Being good is therefore not simply a worthy goal in and of itself. The ancient Greeks put forward the notion of eudaimonia, or a flourishing existence, which argues that happiness comes from being virtuous. Goodness becomes a necessary component if we want to live our best lives.

If you too want to live your best life, as a pharmacist and a human being, consider the following strategies:

### Understand your own motivations

It's important to mentally grasp why we do the things we do – particularly if a habit is present that we want to change. Researchers studying verbal deception at the University of Montreal, found that kids who are more empathetic, are more likely to tell prosocial lies (sparing someone's feelings or smooth over social relations). Even dishonesty becomes less discrete, as 'lying' becomes a way to demonstrate care for another person.

### Make the world a better place

In Judaism, a belief exists that we are largely defined by our actions. In other words, fixing what is broken, is our responsibility. Instead of asking "Am I a good person?" you may want to ask "What good do I do in the world?"

### What will people remember you by at your funeral?

Religion in general is meant to help us realise that life is not all about accumulating material wealth or listing accomplishments. Rather than degrees of material achievement, we should rather be concerned about what people will remember us by. Stated differently, how we acted, how we made a difference, what relationships we built and cherished. Particularly when we feel too busy or overwhelmed, we should be guided by the things we value and find important.

### Take time to fix mistakes

Sometimes doing good has to start with acknowledging, accepting and taking responsibility for our previous mistakes so that we may move forward and try to do better.

Acknowledging that you have done something wrong and making amends to those you have harmed, will sensitise you to act differently when you find yourself in a similar position in future.

Being a virtuous person does not mean you will never make a mistake. Rather, it means figuring out how best to respond when you do make a mistake. Goodness is not a fixed, innate trait but rather a set of actions that can be assessed, recalibrated and nurtured over time.

Our awareness of our own fallibility, as an essential part of being human, may very well be one of our most important tools in becoming better people.