

Values and laws

Shared values

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, after the Second World War, is underpinned by the belief that all human beings share the same basic needs and values and that we are all entitled to these rights. This doesn't mean that there are never

THINK

Do you think everyone is treated fairly throughout the world? Why / why not?

arguments about these rights and how they should be interpreted, but the Declaration sets out the fundamental principles.

The Ten Commitments

Across the world, people are in broad agreement about moral values. These ten guiding principles are put forward by the American Humanist Association for teaching moral values in schools.

- 1 Altruism
- 2 Caring for the World Around Us
- 3 Critical Thinking
- 4 Empathy
- 5 Ethical Development
- 6 Global Awareness
- 7 Human Rights
- 8 Peace and Social Justice
- 9 Responsibility
- 10 Service and Participation

What is altruism? Can you find out?



“I’d like my three-year-old daughter Lily to grow up to be free to make her own decisions about what she believes. To doubt, to question, to make mistakes and learn from them, to love whoever she wants and be kind to everyone, whatever their background. More than anything, I’d like her to be happy, and to endeavour to make others happy too.”

ARIANE SHERINE

COMEDY WRITER, JOURNALIST AND
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THINK

How does Ariane’s statement
make you feel?

Interpreting values

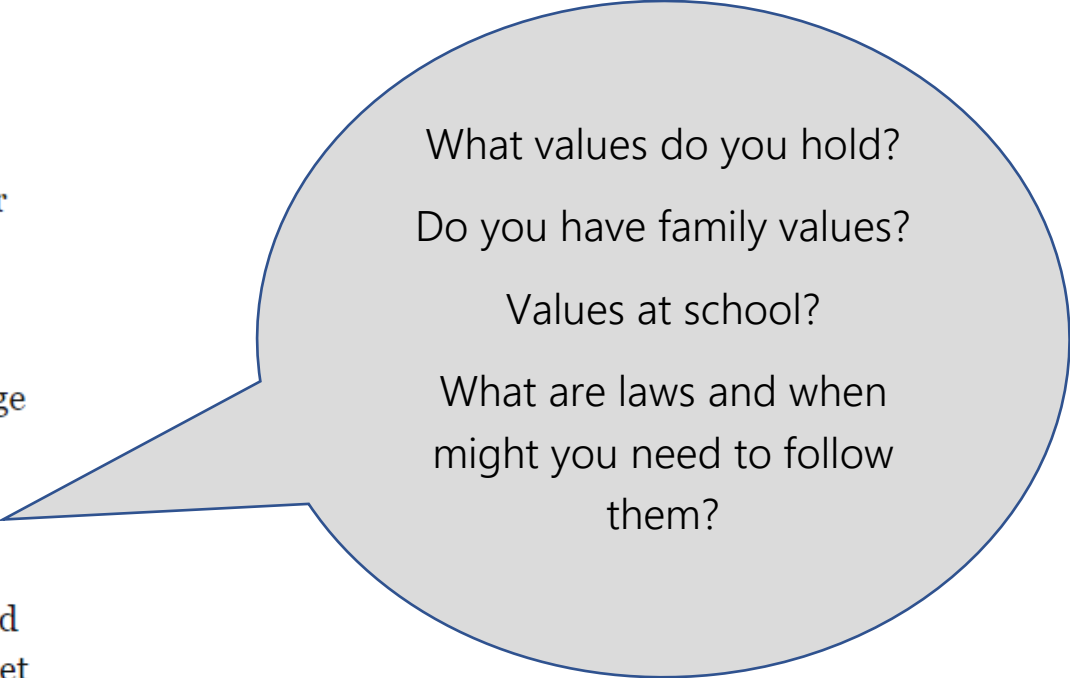
How we – people in general – interpret particular moral questions varies. For example, everyone agrees that murder is wrong, but we might disagree on what counts as murder, or on whether or when it is justifiable to go to war. Most people who live in our society share the same broad values that are the basis of our laws, but we can also work to change laws that we believe are unfair or unjust.

While we share many values with others in our society, there are some we don't share. People have different beliefs about religion, for instance, and there are specific values and rules associated with certain religions, for example about diet or dress.

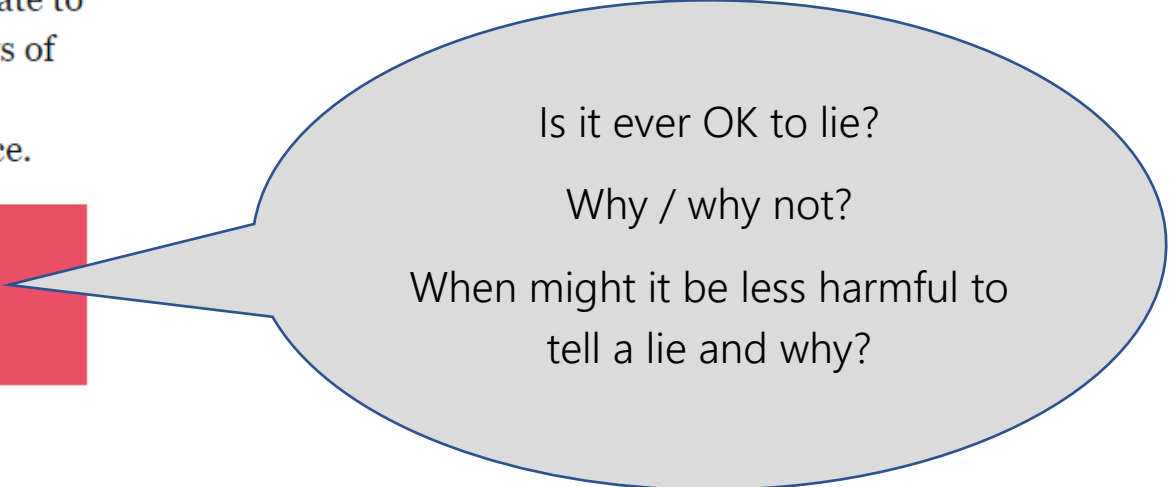
You can see that deciding on your own rules is not completely straightforward. Killing someone, whether deliberately or by accident is much more serious than telling a 'white lie' to protect someone's feelings. We are fortunate to live in a society which has a sound basis of laws and ways of deciding on and changing laws. The first act, killing, is forbidden by law, whereas the second is a personal choice.

Think about

How do you decide for yourself whether to lie or not – especially if no one else is going to find out?



What values do you hold?
Do you have family values?
Values at school?
What are laws and when might you need to follow them?



Is it ever OK to lie?
Why / why not?
When might it be less harmful to tell a lie and why?