# Moral Development: Gilligan

## MORAL DEVELOPMENT: GILLIGAN

### Who is Carol Gilligan?

Carol Gilligan is an American developmental psychologist who focused her research on moral development in girls and women. Her theory of moral development challenges Kohlberg's moral development theory by introducing a feministic approach, arguing that a woman's moral development is rooted in a different set of values and priorities. She proposed that women tend to prioritize care, empathy, and maintaining relationships when making moral decisions.   
There are three main stages and two transitional stages in Gilligan's moral developmental theory: Preconventional, Conventional, and Postconventional.

### What is the Preconventional Stage?

The preconventional stage is focused on a woman's own self and needs for survival. A woman in this stage only cares about her own interests and will choose her own needs without considering others.  
During this first transition from Gilligan’s preconventional stage to her conventional stage, a woman starts realizing that she has a responsibility to others and that her previous actions were kind of selfish.

### What is the Conventional Stage?

In the conventional stage, a woman is focused on her responsibilities towards others rather than herself. This means that she will put the needs of her community and others in her life before her own. A good example of this would be a mother who self-sacrifices for her children.  
This transition from the conventional stage to the postconventional stage is when a woman starts to realize that she needs to find a balance between caring for others and caring for herself.

### What is the Postconventional Stage?

The postconventional stage is the last stage in Carol Gilligan's moral development theory and is the highest stage of moral development. A woman in this stage has learned to master the balance between her needs and others because she sees herself and everyone else as interdependent. A woman now realizes that she has the ultimate choice to care for others because she is now in control of her life. Carol Gilligan noted that some women might never reach this final stage.

### How is this applicable in a classroom?

Gilligan's stages of moral development can find practical use in the classroom, fostering an inclusive and empathetic educational approach that nurtures moral growth and character development among students, irrespective of their gender. It can do this through:  
1.    Fostering empathy, care, and the importance of relationships in the classroom to create a compassionate and supportive environment.  
2.    Educating students about their responsibilities towards themselves and others, emphasizing accountability for their actions within the classroom and the community.  
3.    Encouraging students to find a balance between self-care and caring for others, teaching the importance of both aspects in moral development.  
Integrating Gilligan's stages of moral development into the classroom can contribute to comprehensive character development, cultivate empathy and care, and advance a classroom environment that is more inclusive and respectful, appreciating a range of moral perspectives.

### What did I just learn?

Carol Gilligan's stages of moral development provide a perspective on moral growth in women. Her theory comprises three main stages. In the Preconventional Stage, women prioritize their self-interests and survival needs, often neglecting the concerns of others. To grow, they must realize that they also have a responsibility to others. The Conventional Stage sees women shifting their focus to the well-being of their community and loved ones, sometimes at the expense of their own needs. To grow, they must recognize the need for a balance between caring for others and self-care. In the highest stage, the Postconventional Stage, women achieve a harmonious balance between self and others, recognizing interdependence and making choices in caring for others. Not all may reach this stage. Gilligan's theory challenges Kohlberg’s moral development theory by highlighting the significance of care, empathy, and relationships in women's moral decision-making.

[Gilligan's Stages of Moral Development](https://doi.org/10.1159/000272541)

[Another Publication](https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.47.4.g6167429416hg5l0)

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