

## **Ethics**

***Ethics refers to a system of moral values or the way people distinguish right from wrong.***

***All psychologists must follow a code of ethics, which applies to the treatment of both humans and animals.***

### **Research with Human Subjects**

Researchers must get informed consent from their subjects before beginning research.

Informed consent means that:

- Subjects must know enough about the research to decide whether to participate, and they must agree to participate voluntarily.
- Researchers have an ethical obligation to prevent physical and mental harm to their subjects. If there is any risk of harm, they must warn subjects in advance.
- Researchers also must allow subjects to withdraw from a study at any time if they wish to stop participating for any reason.
- Researchers have an obligation to protect the anonymity of their subjects.

### **Deception**

Some psychological research cannot be done when subjects are fully informed about the purpose of the research, because people sometimes behave differently when under observation. To study people's normal behaviour, researchers sometimes have to deceive subjects.

Deception is considered ethical only if:

- The study will give researchers some valuable insight.
- It would be impossible to do the study without deception.
- Subjects can learn the truth about the study's purpose and methods afterward

## **Research with Animal Subjects**

Although most psychological research involves human subjects, some psychologists study animal subjects instead of or in addition to humans.

Research with animal subjects has helped psychologists do the following:

- Learn facts about animal species
- Find ways to solve human problems
- Study issues that cannot be studied using human subjects for practical or ethical reasons
- Refine theories about human behaviour
- Improve human welfare

Many people question the ethics of animal research because it can involve procedures such as deprivation, pain, surgery and euthanasia.

Psychologists have ethical obligations to treat animal subjects humanely and to do research on animals only when the benefits of the research are clear.

People who are against animal research maintain three arguments:

1. Animals should have the same rights as humans.
2. Society should enact safeguards to protect the safety and welfare of animals.
3. Researchers should not put the well-being of humans above the well-being of animals.