

**Module 5: Life Span Development**  
**Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward**

**Introduction**



# Moral Development from Childhood Onward

Read the following scenario and  
think about what you would do if you  
had to make a similar decision.  
Click the next button to begin.

Read the following scenario and think about what you would do if you had to make a similar decision. Click the next button to begin.

**Module 5: Life Span Development**  
**Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward**

**Scenario**

Click on the decision below that best describes how you would respond to this scenario.

Avoid the party so you will not be punished or disappoint your parents.

Avoid the party because your mom and dad already set the rules of not attending parties if you don't know your friends' parents.

Determine whether or not you think kids your age have the right to go to the party without knowing the host's parent. If you decide they do, then you will go; but if you decide they do not have the right, you will avoid the party.

You are invited to a party this Friday night. You really want to attend because so many of your friends will be there, but you are not sure if your mom and dad will let you go. Although you know the student hosting the party, you do not know his parents.

In the past, your mother and father have not given you permission to go to parties if they do not know the host's parents. Plus, there might be activities happening that your parents would not approve of.

Click on the decision that best describes how you would respond to this scenario.

**Module 5: Life Span Development**  
**Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward**

**Lawrence Kohlberg**

Lawrence Kohlberg's  
Theory of Moral Development



Presented dilemmas to discover people's level of moral development

Believed cognitive and moral development coincided with a child's ability to think logically and abstractly

Came up with a theory of moral development that has three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional

Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) was a psychologist who would present dilemmas like the party scenario you just analyzed, in order to discover people's level of moral development. He believed cognitive and moral development coincided with a child's ability to think logically and abstractly. Kohlberg came up with a theory of moral development that has three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

**Module 5: Life Span Development**  
**Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward**

**Preconventional Explanation**



**Stage of Moral Development:**  
**Preconventional**

**Age:**  
Children 9 or younger

**Characteristics:**  
Make decisions based on the consequences

**Stage One:**  
Be "good" to avoid punishment

**Stage Two:**  
Try to appease others and realize that authority figures sometimes have different viewpoints

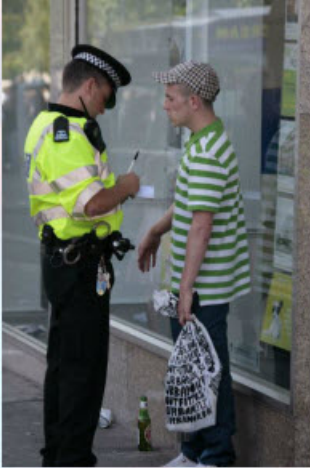


Children who are nine years old or younger typically fall in the preconventional stage of moral development. People in this stage will make their decisions based on consequences. Specifically, in stage one, children want to be "good" to avoid punishments, but do not understand the morals behind the idea of being "good." In stage two, children want to appease others. They also realize that authority figures sometimes have different viewpoints.

**Module 5: Life Span Development**  
**Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward**

**Conventional Explanation**

**Stage of Moral Development:  
Conventional**



**Age:**

Most adolescents and adults

**Characteristics:**

Does not question authority and bases decisions on socially accepted opinions

**Stage Three:**

Want to be accepted by others

**Stage Four:**

Follow rules, uphold the law, avoid guilt

Most adolescents and adults fall into the conventional stage of moral development. In this stage, people do not question authority, and typically base their decisions and beliefs on the socially accepted opinions of others. In stage three, people want to be accepted by others. In stage four, people follow rules, uphold the law, and try to avoid feelings of guilt.

## Module 5: Life Span Development

### Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward

#### Postconventional Explanation

Stage of Moral Development:  
Postconventional

**Age:**  
Most never reach this stage;  
adolescence and older

**Characteristics:**  
Individual moral code; believe in  
individual rights and justice

**Stage Five:**  
Understand laws are for the greater good, but may also be harmful

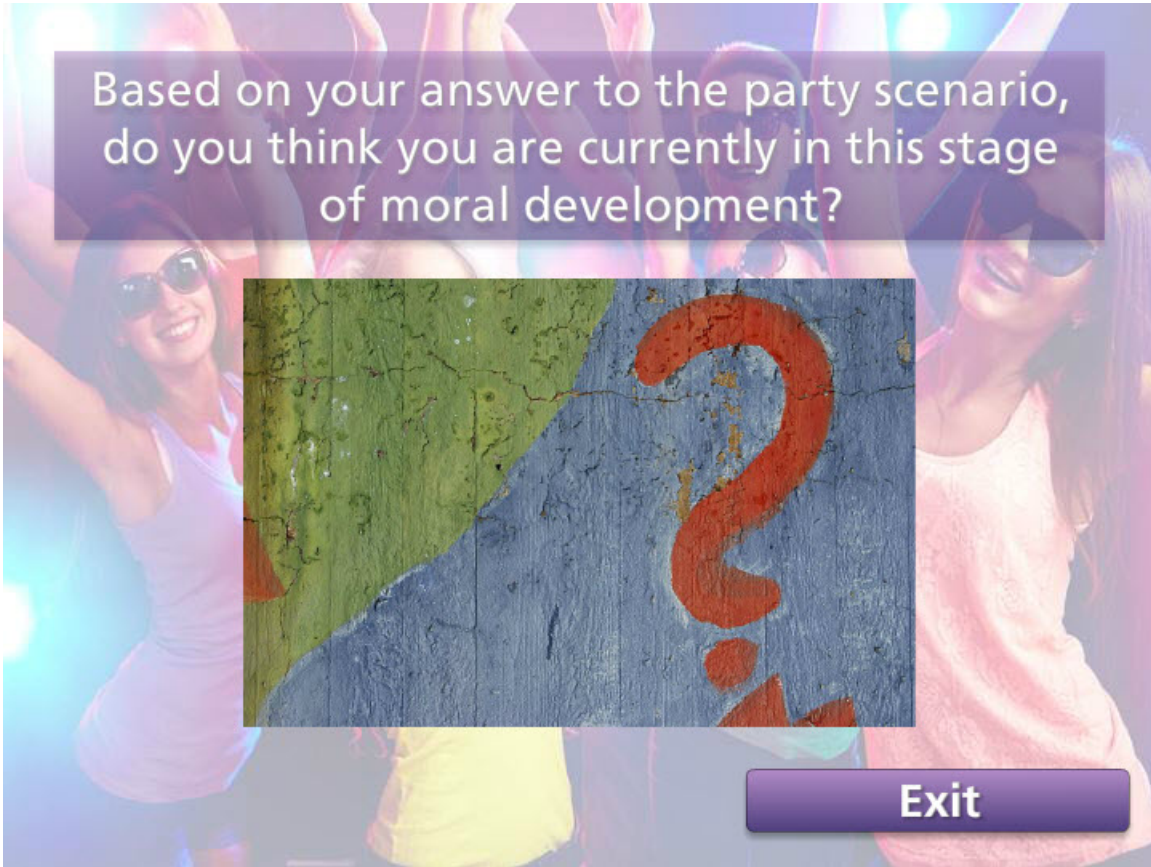
**Stage Six:**  
Follow personal guidelines rather than law despite consequences

An inset image shows a woman with her hand to her chin in a thinking pose. Above her head are two glowing hearts: a red heart with horns and a tail (representing a devil) on the left, and a yellow heart with wings and a halo (representing an angel) on the right.

Kohlberg believed most people do not reach the postconventional stage of moral development. Those who do are in their adolescence or older. The postconventional stage is defined by having a mindset based on your own moral code, rather than the one created by society. People in this stage also deeply believe in individual rights and justice. In stage five, people come to understand that societal laws are meant for the greater good of everyone, but sometimes can actually prove harmful to certain individuals. In stage six, people will follow their own personal guidelines rather than an established law, regardless of any potential consequences.

**Module 5: Life Span Development**  
**Topic 2 Content: Moral Development from Childhood Onward**

**Conclusion**



Based on your answer to the party scenario, do you think you are currently in this stage of moral development?

Exit

The slide features a background image of a party with people dancing. A semi-transparent purple box contains the question. Below it is a graphic of a red question mark on a blue and green textured surface. A purple button with the word 'Exit' is located in the bottom right corner.

Based on your answer to the party scenario, do you think you are currently in this stage of moral development?