

# MORAL FOUNDATIONS

**Moral arguments are essential to many stories in activism. But according to the social and cultural psychologists at Moral Foundations, a global study showed that there are certain similarities and themes cutting across cultures. Specifically, they found five foundational moral values that are evoked around the world.**

## **1 CARE / HARM**

- This foundation is related to our long evolution as mammals with attachment systems and an ability to feel (and dislike) the pain of others. It underlies virtues of kindness, gentleness, and nurturance.

## **2 FAIRNESS / CHEATING**

- This foundation is related to the evolutionary process of reciprocal altruism. It generates ideas of justice, rights, and autonomy.

## **3 LOYALTY / BETRAYAL**

- This foundation is related to our long history as tribal creatures able to form shifting coalitions. It underlies virtues of patriotism and self-sacrifice for the group. It is active anytime people feel that it's 'one for all, and all for one'.

## **4** AUTHORITY / SUBVERSION

- This foundation was shaped by our long primate history of hierarchical social interactions. It underlies virtues of leadership and followership, including deference to legitimate authority and respect for traditions.

## **5** SANCTITY / DEGRADATION

- This foundation was shaped by the psychology of disgust and contamination. It underlies religious notions of striving to live in an elevated, less carnal, more noble way. It underlies the widespread idea that the body is a temple which can be desecrated by immoral activities and contaminants (an idea not unique to religious traditions).

**WHICH OF THESE MORAL FOUNDATIONS  
COULD BE USEFUL IN YOUR STORYTELLING?**

*This exercise comes from the Moral Foundations Theory.*