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Throughout a childhood, children learn right and wrong through what they witness in their environment. In some cases, it may not be clear to a child why something is right or wrong. As they grow older, a child may realize the reason or need an explanation. A perfect explanation can happen through asking the four simple questions, included in the "Four-Way Test". It features four questions that can help you determine if a decision you are about to make is right or wrong. You could have a decision in mind, but double check the decision with the "Four-Way Test". It can be known as an experiment, in which you are testing for whether a decision is ethical. I recently went to the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards in July 2008, where we learned about the "Four-Way Test". I thought it was a very honest test, and applied to all the activities we did and to decisions in the future.

"Is it the truth?" is the first question you should ask yourself when making a decision. As a student, I am not going to cheat on a test because when I ask myself if it is the truth, I would have already failed the "Four-Way Test". It relates to general life decisions also. For an example, if you are having a conversation with someone, lying about something is not going to be the truth. "Is it the truth?" is a majorly important question that no one should answer no to. If you are not being truthful to yourself, then the decision you want to make is not best for you or others.

"Is it fair to all concerned?" is the next step in the "Four-Way Test". Most of the time, a decision you have to make can widely impact others. It can be whether you are on a sports team, at work, or in a group with others. I remember many times in school when a classmate of mine made a decision to do something that was not ethical. In one case, it was that a student stole an object of another student, but would not admit to it. This caused everyone in the case to get punished because the one student, who did it, made the decision not to take the blame. The student's decision was not fair to all concerned in this case. When many people make a decision, this is the one question they forget the most. They may just think about if it is fair them and not about if it is fair to all concerned.

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“Will it build good will and better friendship?” is another very important step in the “Four-Way Test”. This relates to how decisions can affect friendships and, also building a better person. If a decision will make you a better person, such as, strengthening your friendships and making you more helpful, then it’s a good decision. A choice, such as, just helping a friend with a favor can make your friendship better by that person gaining trust in you, and helping that person see how kind you are.

“Will it be beneficial to all concerned?” is the last question to ask yourself in the “Four-Way Test”. This question applies to whether or not a decision you make will benefit others. An example of this question is volunteering. All volunteering is beneficial to others. I have plenty of experience with volunteering and how there are several tasks that can be beneficial to all concerned. It also applies to decisions, and if the result will be beneficial to all concerned. The ethical thing to do is to make sure a decision you make will benefit everyone, instead of just yourself. Why would you just want yourself to be happy with the decision, when all concerned can be satisfied with the choice?

The “Four-Way Test” is an excellent source of the truth within yourself and others, while coming to the right conclusion about a decision. It can be suitable for many different dilemmas, no matter what age of life it applies to. The test can help you reach the most reasonable decision that will be beneficial to everyone. It can strengthen friendships and help make you an overall better person than you already were.