

The Ethical-Reflexive Engagement Model

A Practitioner Reflective Question Guide

More aware. More responsible. More human.

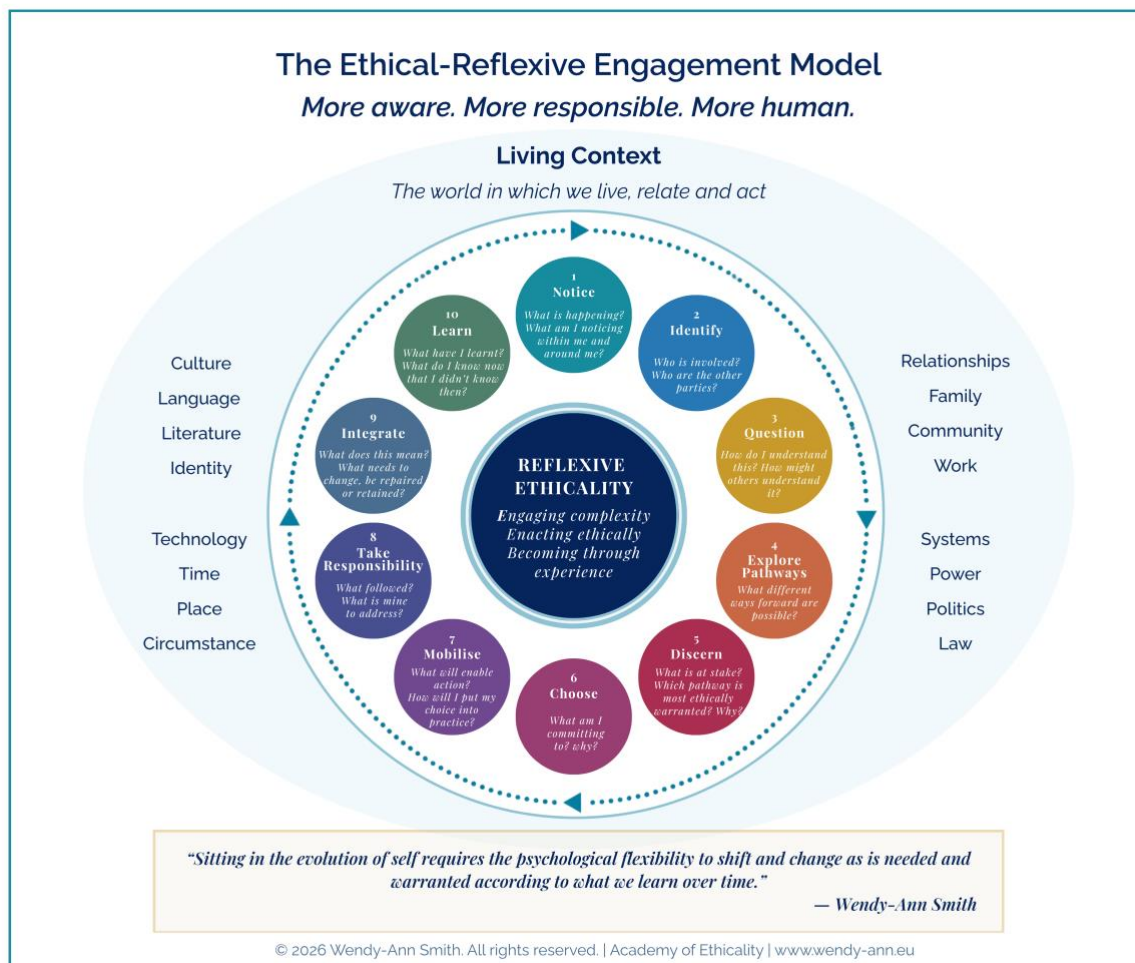
A reflective resource for engaging with ethical complexity in practice

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About this guide. The Ethical-Reflexive Engagement Model is a practitioner model designed to support ethical-reflexive engagement in professional and relational practice. This companion guide expands the model's ten movements through reflective questions that can be used individually or with others.

The questions are invitations to inquiry rather than a checklist to complete. They may be used before, during or after a situation, and there is no requirement to move through them in a fixed sequence.

Living Context. Throughout your reflection, remain attentive to the relational, cultural, social, systemic and situational world in which you live, relate and act. Context is not a separate step; it is present throughout ethical-reflexive engagement.

1. Notice

What is happening? What am I noticing within me and around me?

- What am I seeing, hearing, sensing or feeling?
- What seems particularly significant, uncomfortable or easy to overlook?
- What thoughts, emotions, bodily responses or impulses are present for me?
- What am I already assuming about what is happening?
- What might I need to pause long enough to notice more fully?

2. Identify

Who is involved? Who are the other parties?

- Who is directly involved, and who may be indirectly affected?
- Whose interests, needs, rights or wellbeing need to be considered?
- Whose voice is present, and whose may be absent or less easily heard?
- What relationships, roles or responsibilities connect the people involved?
- Where might power, authority, dependence or vulnerability be shaping participation?

3. Question

How do I understand this? How might others understand it?

- What story am I telling myself about what is happening?
- What assumptions or interpretations am I bringing to the situation?
- What might I be taking for granted?
- How might the situation look from another person's perspective?
- What cultural, relational or systemic influences may be shaping how this is understood?
- What do I not yet know, and what might I need to ask?

4. Explore Pathways

What different ways forward are possible?

- What possibilities have I not yet considered?
- What other pathways might emerge if I widen my perspective?
- What could I do, say, ask, pause, change or decline to do?
- What possibilities become available if I move beyond my first or preferred response?
- Who or what might help me see additional pathways?
- If one pathway becomes blocked, what alternatives remain?

5. Discern

What is at stake? Which pathway is most ethically warranted? Why?

- What values are at stake for me and for others?
- What tensions or competing goods am I weighing?
- What responsibilities arise here, and towards whom?
- What assumptions might I need to challenge before reaching a judgement?
- What are the possible consequences of the pathways I am considering?
- What does my reasoning tell me? What are emotion, intuition, embodied knowing and relational understanding contributing?
- Which pathway can I most ethically account for, and why?

6. Choose

What am I committing to? Why?

- What choice am I prepared to make?
- How does this choice reflect what matters and the responsibilities I hold?
- Am I choosing intentionally, or am I being driven primarily by habit, pressure, fear or avoidance?
- What am I accepting by making this choice?
- Can I explain and stand behind the basis on which I am choosing?
- What uncertainty remains, and can I responsibly act while holding it?

7. Mobilise

What will enable action? How will I put my choice into practice?

- What outcome matters here, and what is the next meaningful step towards it?
- What internal resources can I draw upon?
- Who or what can support me in acting?
- What preparation, conversation, information or boundary might be needed?
- What obstacles or risks could inhibit action, and what pathways might help me navigate them?
- What courage, steadiness or persistence might this action require?
- How will I move from intention into responsible action?

8. Take Responsibility

What followed? What is mine to address?

- What actually happened as a result of my action or inaction?
- What consequences were intended, and what consequences were unexpected?
- How were others affected?
- What feedback or response do I need to attend to?
- What is mine to acknowledge or take responsibility for?
- Has there been harm, rupture or misunderstanding that requires response or repair?
- What responsibility remains even if my original intention was sound?

9. Integrate

What does this mean? What needs to change, be repaired or retained?

- What does this experience mean for how I understand the situation now?
- What has shifted in my understanding of myself, others or my practice?
- What needs to be repaired, restored or revisited?
- What worked or mattered that I want to retain?
- What assumptions, habits, boundaries or ways of engaging may need to change?
- What am I carrying emotionally, relationally or professionally from this experience?
- What needs nourishment, support or time before I move forward?

10. Learn

What have I learnt? What do I know now that I didn't know then?

- What have I learned about myself, others and the context in which I acted?
- What became visible only through experience?
- What would I recognise earlier if I encountered something similar again?

- What might I approach differently next time?
- What has this experience strengthened, unsettled or developed in me?
- Who am I now, having moved through this experience?
- What do I carry forward into future choices, relationships and action?

Returning to Living Context

At any point in the model, you may return to the wider context and ask:

- What in the wider context is shaping what I can see, say, choose or do?
- How are culture, relationships, systems, power, place, time or circumstance influencing this situation?
- What do I understand about myself in this situation — what I believe, value, assume, expect, or believe about who I am?
- What may become visible if I locate myself differently within this context?

Development of the Guide

This guide accompanies the Ethical-Reflexive Engagement Model (Smith, 2026), a practitioner model for ethical-reflexive engagement. Its reflective questions draw upon and extend Wendy-Ann Smith's published and practice-based work on Courageous Becoming and the Praxis Model. Existing questions have been retained or adapted where they align with the ten movements, alongside additional questions developed specifically for this model.

The questions are intended to support reflection and dialogue. They do not replace professional codes, legal obligations, organisational requirements, supervision, consultation or other forms of ethical guidance where these are relevant.

References

- Smith, W. A. (2025). Courageous Becoming: Cultivating Ethicality. *Journal of Coaching Ethics*, 2(5), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.62882/47adx108> & <https://wendysmith.eu/courageous-becoming/>
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