Care focused approaches to moral theory have their source in feminist ethics of care. A feminist ethics of care offers an alternative to traditional moral theories, which tend to include a focus on impartiality. Care ethics emphasizes that human relationships are not between equally powerful, independent persons but between unequal and interdependent persons.

Because of its emphasis on building a model of ethics that fits ordinary life experience, care ethics has been influential in applied ethics.

Key early proponents and texts include:

Gilligan, C. (1982) In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Key later proponents and texts include:

Held, V. (2006). The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kittay, E. and E.K. Feder (2003). The Subject of Care: Feminist Perspectives on Dependency, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ruddick, S. (1989). Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace, New York: Ballantine Books.