

MODULE

11

Ethics and Problem Solving

"Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have the right to do and what is right to do."
 - Potter Stewart

Introduction

Ethics, put simply, are the standards of what is right or wrong. An individual's ethics play a large role in the decisions they make as a leader and how they solve problems because ethics determine the individual's priorities and thinking. In this module, we will be exploring different types of reasoning and leadership styles, helping students grasp a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as a leader.

Student Objectives:

1. Students will be able to understand a basic definition of ethics.
2. Students will be able to understand how ethics play a role in problem solving and their leadership style.

Agenda

1. Cannibalism Discussion (25 min)
2. Intro to Ethics
 - a. Intro to Ethics: Trolley Activity (15 min)
 - b. Intro to Ethics: Lecture (10 min)
3. Northouse Questionnaire (10 min)

Facilitation Notes

- Make sure to assign the [cannibalism story](#) before this module.
- It might be useful to make a slideshow so the students can read the Trolley problems and because there is a lot of information in the lecture
- Print enough copies of the Northouse Questionnaire so each student in the class has one

Facilitator Guide

Cannibalism Discussion

Purpose: Understand the importance of discussion through discussing a very controversial issue.

Materials: [Story](#) (Assign before class)

Directions:

1. Before going into the discussion question, tell students that the goal is to be as respectful as possible for everyone discussing the issue.
2. For those that didn't read the story, read this [summary](#).

Discussion:

1. Suppose you find yourself in a situation in which killing an innocent person is the only way to prevent many innocent people from dying. What's the right thing to do? Did Dudley do the right thing?
2. If the crewmembers had drawn lots as Dudley originally proposed, (keeping in mind Brooks still did not consent) would the situation where three crew members eat the other become more or less ethical?
3. The end verdict of the case given by the court was the death sentence to be passed on Dudley and Stephens. Given the fact that they would be killed either way, does your stance on their actions change? If not necessarily from one side to another, does your viewpoint become more or less extreme?

[Intro to Ethics: Trolley Activity](#)

Purpose: Students will learn how to use their own ethical and moral rational.

Materials: <http://justiceharvard.org/themoralsideofmurder/>

Directions:

1. Ask students each question (below)
2. After the questions are asked and discussed, explain to students their moral philosophy choices.

Questions:

1. Suppose you are the driver of a trolley car. Your trolley car is hurtling down the tracks at 60 MPH, and you notice five unsuspecting workers at the end of the track. You tried to stop, but you can't because your brakes don't work. If you crash into the five workers, they will die, so you feel hopeless. However, off to the right, there is a side track where only one worker is standing. Your steering wheel works so you can turn the trolley onto that track and kill the one to spare the five. What do *you* do and why?
2. You are standing on a footbridge above the tram tracks. You can see the trolley hurtling towards the five unsuspecting workers, but there's no lever to divert it. However, there is a large man standing next to you on the bridge. You're confident that he would stop the trolley. He would die, but he would spare the five. Would you push the man over the bridge? Why or why not?
3. You're a doctor in an emergency room, and six patients come to you. They've been in a terrible trolley car wreck. Five of them sustained moderate injuries. One is severely injured, and you could spend all day working on that one victim, but, in that time, the five other patients would die. Or you could look after the five, restore them to health, but the one severely injured victim would die. Would you save the five or the one as a doctor? Why or why not?

Explanation (facilitator discretion; skim or be thorough depending on time)

1. Those who said the right thing to do depended on the consequences from the

action. For example in our trolley activity, this would be the reasoning of, “better that five will live even if one dies”. This is a consequentialist moral reasoning, which is locating morality in the consequences of an act.

2. In some cases, you may not have been so sure about a consequentialist reasoning. You might have hesitated to push the large man over the train or to physically save a life over another as a doctor. This is categorical moral reasoning as each of you were considering the intrinsic quality of the act itself – regardless of the consequences. Thus, categorical moral reasoning locates morality in certain duties and rights.

Intro to Ethics: Lecture

Purpose: Students will understand the basics of ethics and the variety of ways ethics can be interpreted. Students will also understand what ethics should not be tied to if they choose to define ethics themselves.

Materials: [Slideshow](#) to aid facilitators if necessary

Information:

What are Ethics not?

- Ask your students what they think ethics is. Some common responses:
 - "Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong."
 - "Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs."
 - "Being ethical is doing what the law requires."
 - "Ethics consists of the standards of behavior our society accepts."
- Explain that ethics is not tied to one’s feelings
 - “A person following his or her feelings may recoil from doing what is right. In fact, feelings frequently deviate from what is ethical.” (<https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/>)
- Explain that ethics is not tied to religion
 - “Most religions, of course, advocate high ethical standards. Yet if ethics were confined to religion, then ethics would apply only to religious people. But ethics applies as much to the behavior of the atheist as to that of the devout religious person. Religion can set high ethical standards and can provide intense motivations for ethical behavior. Ethics, however, cannot be confined to religion nor is it the same as religion.” (<https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/>)
- Explain that the law is not always ethical
 - ex.) pre-Civil War slavery laws and the old apartheid laws of present-day South Africa (<https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/>)
- Explain that “what society does” is not always ethical
 - An entire society can become ethically corrupt. Nazi Germany is a good example of a morally corrupt society. (<https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/>)

Then, What are Ethics?

- Ethics is two things according to the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics from Santa Clara University
 1. “First, ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues.”
 2. “Secondly, ethics refers to the study and development of one's ethical standards.”
- Emphasize that everyone, even researchers and professionals, view/explain/define ethics differently

- The aim of ethics has been viewed in different ways: according to some, it is the discernment of right from wrong actions; to others, ethics separates that which is morally good from what is morally bad; alternatively, ethics purports to devise the principles by means of which conducting a life worth to be lived. ([Ethics: the Search of the Life Worth Living \(thoughtco.com\)](https://www.thoughtco.com/ethics-the-search-of-the-life-worth-living/))

Discussion (Optional):

1. Should ethics play a substantial role in our society? Why or Why not?
2. Why do you think the definition of “ethics” is different for everyone?
3. Do ethics impact the way one makes decisions?

Northouse Activity

Purpose: Students will understand the role ethics play in various situations they may encounter in the business world/workplace realm. As well as what type of ethical leadership style they may possess.

Materials: [Northouse Questionnaire](#)

Directions:

1. Give each student one copy of the Northouse Quiz
2. Explain the purpose of the quiz and the response alternatives
3. Read aloud each situation and have students select an answer based upon what they believe they would do in the scenario
4. After all the situations have been read aloud, explain the scoring. As well as the scoring interpretation
5. If students are comfortable, have them share their results

Discussion:

1. Do you think the ethical leadership style that your responses lead to properly represents you? Why or Why not?
2. If you could pick any ethical leadership style to represent you, which would you pick and why?
3. Should your ethical leadership style define what kind of person you are? In terms of how you present yourself.

Sources:

<https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/>

<https://ethics.org.au/why-were-here/what-is-ethics/>

https://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/intro_1.shtml

<https://www.thoughtco.com/ethics-2670484>