



# Ethics: It's All About The Little Things

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# Outline & Expectations

- Plan for the class (lecture, exercises/group work, engaging discussion)
- Questions – ask throughout
- Electronics expectations



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# What Are Ethics?

- Cultural constructs
- Doing the right thing all the time
- Being more good than bad
- Trading now for later?
- Reflection of who we are
- Related to character

THERE IS  
NO RIGHT WAY  
TO DO  
A WRONG THING.



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## Discussion

- Describe your past experiences with ethics trainings
- Does taking ethics courses make people more ethical?
- What would be ideal to learn?



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## Test

- Employee theft (material goods & time)
- Lying (or not telling the full truth)
- Short-cuts, shoddy/inaccurate work
- Not holding people accountable
- Ignoring/disrespectful comm.
- Failing to honoring commitments
- Badmouthing colleagues or gossip
- Favorites/nepotism
- Being a jerk
- Not reporting/speaking up when you see bad behavior
- Passing the trash
- Minimized someone



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## Statistics On Ethics <sup>3,4,5</sup>

- 74% of students admitted to cheating on at least one exam in the last year
- 37% said they would lie in order to get a good job
- 76% of MBA professionals were willing to commit fraud to enhance profit reports
- 41% of private sector & 57% of public sector employees knew of unethical/illegal activities in their org. and did not report it

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# Code Of Silence 7

- Academy Recruits
  - 46% would not tell on an officer for having sex on duty
  - 23% would not tell on a cop for regularly smoking pot
- Officers
  - 46% had witnessed misconduct by another officer and did not report it
  - Pressured to not report the incident:
    - 47% by those who were involved
    - 23% by other officers
    - 73% by supervisors (mostly upper ranks)



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# Why Aren't We More Ethical?

- We think we are good ethical people
- Often judge actions on results that follow and not on the ethical nature of the action
- Most decisions (90%) occur "unconsciously and automatically"
  - System 1 vs. system 2
- Decisions use the "emotional" part of the brain <sub>6</sub>
- Cognitive component comes after decision has been made
  - Leads to rationalizations



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# Rationalizations

- It's not that bad
- My boss told me to do it
- No one will get hurt
- They "deserve" it
- Everyone else is doing it
- There is something more important
- I deserve this/entitled to \_\_\_\_
- We were obligated to \_\_\_\_



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## Ethical Fading <sub>2</sub>

- When you don't see your behaviors as having an ethical dimension (cognitive bias)
  - Acting for supervisor/agency
  - Strategic move/business decision
  - Necessary evil/part of doing business
  - Doing whatever it takes to.....



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## Situational Influences <sub>9,10</sub>

- Situational/social influence is powerful
  - Milgram - shock
  - Zimbardo - prison
- People, environment and situations often drive our choices
  - We tend to conform to the "norm"
- In-group vs. out-group behavior



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## Dangers Of Current Mentality

- Continue to be unconscious about our ethical/character compromises
- Find ways to justify our behaviors
- Create a culture that unknowingly reinforces bad behavior
- Potential to head down a slippery slope
- Hinders us from growth



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## Why Is Change Hard?

- We all think we are ethical (denial)
- Easier to not be ethical
- Seek data to confirm our biases
- Don't see ethics as a perishable skill
- We believe a focus on rules/policy/law & consequences work

**CHANGE IS GOOD.**  
You go first!

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## Improving Our Ethics & Character

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## Personal Strategies

- Increase awareness
- Deliberately do system 2 thinking
- Wonder, worry & doubt
  - Keep ego in check
- Must consider long-term impact of choices
  - Is "now" really more important?
  - What is my price?
  - How are people/situation influencing me?
- Look for/ask about blind spots

many people would be scared if they saw in the mirror, not their faces... but their character.

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## Personal Strategies Cont.

- Coping/emotion awareness & management
- Create support/accountability system
  - You become the 5 people you spend the most time with
- Be aware of the potential corrupting influence of power & practice empathy



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## Gray Areas Of Ethics

1. Desire to please (authority/friends)
2. Desire to fit in
3. Outside of comfort zone/strengths
4. Guilt/shame
5. Fear, intimidation or coercion
6. Keep from loss (or get benefit)
7. Friendship/love
8. Violation is not "that serious"
9. Not directly your responsibility
10. Being the person of least power



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## Navigating The Gray

1. Talk to someone you trust
2. Is it legal? Does it go against the mission, policies or values of the org?
3. Is the choice the highest reflection of good character?
4. Would I be proud if my choice was on the front page of the local or national newspaper or lead story on nightly news?
5. Does this choice strengthen or weaken my integrity long-term?



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## Navigating The Gray Cont.

6. Would my children be proud of me and would I be proud if they made the same choice?
7. Tomorrow, next week or next year would I look back and have any regret about this decision?
8. What emotions or self-survival mechanism are at play that might be affecting my choice?
9. Is the choice balanced? (everyone treated fairly or does one person or side get more benefit?)



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## Personal Check Ups

- Would my parents be proud if they just saw what I did or knew the choice I made?
- If what I did when no one was looking went "viral" would I, my family, friends, and community be proud?
- How would the community view the ethical dilemma I am dealing with (or the choice I just made)?
- If a stranger made this choice would I judge/condemn or support it?
- Would this choice be an example of what "to do?"

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## Leading With Ethics

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## Fostering Ethics In Others

- Do they know how to navigate the gray?
  - Are they prepared to deal with push back & challenges?
  - Team discussions of ethical concepts
  - Are you talking about the "small things?"
  
- Character is the foundation
  - Intentional conversations
  - Team "Commandments"
  - Debriefs/focus of the day
  - Scenarios/videos
  - Get them involved

Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed to develop good character.  
- Heracitus

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## Proactive Practice

- Engage in pre-planning
  - When/then
  
- Don't get complacent (below 100)
  
- Think about consequences
  - Pause before you act
  
- Visual reminders/triggers
  
- Higher cause/calling
  
- Practice bravery

**It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.**  
- Howard Hoff



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## Building Character Every Day

Character may be manifested in the great moments, but it is made in the small ones.  
- Phillips Brooks

**DON'T PRACTICE UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT. PRACTICE UNTIL YOU CAN'T GET IT WRONG.**

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