



## **DECISION MAKING and ETHICS**

**Ethics:** Dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions.

When thinking about ethics, it is helpful to look back at the areas of life that helped mold your sense of ethics. Consider the following:

**For thought and discussion: How have the following areas influenced your ethics?**

- Family
- Close friends
- Extended Peer group
- Society
- Past experiences
- Maturity level
- Politics
- Spiritual/religious beliefs

**DIGGING DEEPER – Consider the following questions to help you determine what defines your current sense of ethics:**

- What are some of the things in your life that keep you motivated? (What keeps you going?)
- What is most important to you on a day-to-day basis? On a long-term basis? (Values)
- Where do you draw the line? (What are some things you believe you would NOT do, ever?)
- What are your priorities? (Who or what things do you put first in life?)
- Whom do you trust when it comes to seeking wisdom and sound advice?
- What past experiences have shaped your sense of right and wrong today?
- Are there any other sources that you refer to for answers or guidance? (Prayer, religious material, philosophy, self-help books)



**Dilemma:** a situation requiring a choice between two or more undesirable alternatives.

**EXERCISE - Ethical Dilemmas:** What would you do in the following scenarios? What factors might affect your decisions? – Discuss each one progressively by adding information to the dilemma using the bullet points:

1. A *friend's* significant other is attractive to you and wants to have sex, promising to keep it on the down low.

Do any of the following factors make a difference for you? – (Consider each one by one)

- The attractiveness of the person? (What if he/she is extremely attractive?)
- The closeness of the friendship? (What if you aren't that close with the friend?)
- Your feelings (What if besides attraction, you have real feelings for the person?)
- The risk (What if you are 100% sure no one will ever find out?)

2. You see an opportunity to take some money *from someone* when no one is looking

Do any of these factors affect your decision?

- The amount of money
- The risk involved
- The victim (What if it's a stranger, what if it is a friend, how close do they need to be for you to say no? what if it is family?)

3. You catch your one friend hooking up with another *friend's* significant other. Do you tell?

Do any of these factors affect your decision?

- What if you are closer with one friend than the other? (Would it matter which one?)
- What if there is a risk you will get hurt if you open your mouth?
- What if you know that if you don't speak up, you will lose a friend when they find out on their own?
- What if one of the parties is married or engaged?

4. Your *friend* emails you a note with suicidal overtones. What do you do?

Do any of these factors affect your decision?

- The closeness of friend?
- The past mental stability of friend?
- The content of the email?
- What if you just read the email but it was sent originally to you?



5. You find out a friend committed a serious crime against *someone else*, do you tell?

How do these factors influence your decision?

- He/she knows you know
- The closeness of friend
- The seriousness of the crime
- What if another innocent person was being blamed?
- What if the innocent person wrongfully accused was also your friend?
- What if the victim was also your friend?

6. You find out a co-worker is stealing on the job behind your *boss's* back

Factors that may influence your decision:

- Your relationship with the co-worker
- Your relationship with your boss (What if you are friends with your boss?)
- The amount/frequency of theft (What if it's just one time? What if it is ongoing?)
- What if you know you will be fired if your boss later finds out you knew and you didn't tell and you value the job?

7. You and *someone else* find out you are faced with an unplanned pregnancy

How may these factors influence what you do?

- The other person's decision on the matter
- The closeness of the relationship
- Your feelings for the other person
- Your age and financial situation
- Your religious beliefs
- Your families feelings/beliefs

8. Someone wants to pay you to do something behind your *significant other's* back?

How would these factors influence your decision?

- Your financial situation at the time
- The amount offered
- The act that they are trying to pay you to do
- The risk involved
- Your relationship with your significant other



9. Your friend wants you to help them in a physical fight

Do any of these factors affect your decision?

- What if your friend is in the wrong?
- What if you know and like the people you may have to now fight?
- What if it looks like you may get hurt pretty badly (like if you were outnumbered)?
- What if the reason for the fight seems totally stupid?
- What if you already are on in legal trouble and the potential for another arrest is there?

10. You are offered a significant bribe to look the other way at something that you know is wrong

How would these factors influence your decision?

- The amount of the bribe
- The act you are supposed to be overlooking
- The risk involved

#### FINAL DISCUSSION:

- Do you have any true to life ethical dilemmas that you can think of that were not already discussed?
  
- Have you ever had an experience that stands out as a life lesson that changed your sense of ethics?
  
- How has your sense of ethics changed as you have gotten older? (In other words are there any situations involving right or wrong that you handle differently now than when you were young?)
  
- When it comes to right and wrong, what kinds of things do you want to teach your children? (Even if you do not have any, imagine)