



## Moral of the Story

**Moral:** a lesson, especially one concerning what is right or prudent, that can be derived from a story, a piece of information, or an experience.

Opening Exercise - Pick a "**Moral of the story**" from the list provided. Try to tell a story that supports the message you chose.

- If possible, **use a true story from your own life or from someone you know well**
- If you cannot think of a true story, then make one up or else use a story that you got from TV, a movie, a book or from somewhere else

### LIST – “Morals of the Story” to choose from

Honesty is the best policy  
Don't judge others  
Quitters never win  
Keep your word  
Treat others the way you want to be treated  
You reap what you sow  
To forgive is divine  
The price of success is responsibility  
Think before you act  
When in doubt, leave it out  
Patience is a virtue  
You've got to give respect to get respect  
Don't judge a book by its cover  
A friend in need is a friend indeed  
Don't make promises you cannot keep  
Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive  
Pride comes before a fall  
Never look down on anyone unless you are helping them up  
Common sense is not all that common  
The best things in life are free  
Lost time is never found again  
Fall seven times, get up eight  
Stupid is as stupid does  
Your past does not equal your future  
You make mistakes; mistakes don't make you  
Happiness is wanting what you have not having what you want  
If you keep on lying long enough eventually, you'll start believing your own lies  
Often when you think you have everyone fooled you are only fooling yourself  
Slow and steady wins the race  
Brains over brawn  
Look before you leap  
One good turn deserves another  
You become who you spend your time with  
A fool and his money are soon parted  
Lead by example  
To thine own self be true  
Nothing worth having comes easy  
Its hard to fail but its worse to never have tried  
Do what you always did, get what you always got



**Discussion:** This part may not be for all groups as this is a more mature discussion that takes open mindedness and ability to think and reason on some of these points in order discuss things in a positive way. These discussions can get “deep”

**Morals** are derived from a mixed variety of life areas. We can get our morals from a combination of factors (to varying degrees for each person with some being more influential than others) including:

- Family
- Friends
- Society
- Education
- Media (News, books, TV, radio, internet)
- ‘Influencers” and “Heroes”
- Political views
- Religious/Spiritual Beliefs
- Values (What we care about and find to be important)
- Past experiences and current life circumstances

#### **Some interesting thoughts about morals:**

1. Many scientists believe that humans seem to be “hard wired” to have an internal sense of right and wrong (A conscience, although not everyone uses it to the same degree)
2. Our morals can change and grow as we learn and have new experiences while other morals stay consistent. (For your example, you may have some moral beliefs that are extremely different today than what you believed as a child, but other moral beliefs may have lasted a lifetime)

#### **Why discuss morals in substance use and mental health treatment?**

1. Morals impact our decisions. Our ability to make progress with substance use and mental health goals (and general life goals too) is tied to our ability to make good decisions. *Morals impact decisions which impact change and recovery*
2. Questions about our morality build insight and self-awareness. Being able to ask searching moral questions like “*Is this really the right thing to do?*” or “*Is there a chance I am wrong even though I feel right?*” are at the foundation of learning, growing, and changing for the better as a person. It is important to be able to ask ourselves and reflect on deeper questions rather than just stay at the “surface level”
3. Our morals can motivate us – A strong sense or desire to “do what is right” can be a very powerful force to keep a person moving forward day by day even sometimes in spite of adversity or difficulty



## Important things to note about misguided morality

1. Doing the right thing often feels right especially after we did it, which is nice. However, by contrast - just because something “feels” right, does not automatically mean that it is the right thing to do. Feelings can be deceiving at times. It can be important to sometimes do the following when we need to make moral decisions:
  - a. Really think things through and consider where decisions will lead us and how our decisions impact others (Some use prayer or meditation for this but even if that is not for you, we all can take time to think carefully about the consequences of our decisions before we act)
  - b. Talk to others whom we trust when making moral decisions to help sort out our thoughts and emotions which can be confusing at times.
2. What is right and what is wrong is not simply determined based on popularity. “Everyone does it” or “Everyone thinks this way” does not mean that “it” is the right thing to do. History has shown this repeatedly where large groups have made bad decisions because everyone just followed the crowd or an influential leader
3. Moral relativism is based on the false notion that just because something is “not as bad as” something else then it is okay. An example of moral relativism would be “So what if I \_\_\_\_ (Negative Action – like “steal”, for instance) a little bit every now and then, there are people out there doing it every single day!” – Just because we do something “less than” others does not automatically make “it” into a good thing. *(To clarify, stealing less, for example, is better than stealing a lot, but still, that does not mean stealing itself is good)*
4. Just because something sounds nice and is being presented in an attractive way does not mean it is necessarily “right” or “good” – The internet is filled with “wise” sayings, presented in all kinds of attractive ways with tons of “likes” and reshares but still not all advice is good advice. It is important to think about it for ourselves

**Closing thought** – This was a lot of information that was reviewed. In conclusion, what is one, two or three things based on this discussion today that you are going to take with you and work on?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3..

