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ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND CHOOSING BETWEEN TWO RIGHTS

To deal with ethical dilemmas, you need to find the answers to these questions:

1. How do you define a dilemma?
2. What values are at stake in the dilemma?
3. What principles are at stake in the dilemma?
4. What personal issues are at stake in the dilemma?

Define a dilemma?

Since a dilemma deals with two possible rights, these two right choices must be clearly stated. Then the dilemma can move to a solution, where one of the rights is preferred over the other one. Determine the two sides of the dilemma. (___ v. ___) Write the dilemma as "a. one view" versus "b. another view."

Analyzing dilemmas: Ethical dilemmas are termed in the form of _____ v. _____, such as Equality of workers v. Integrity of organization.

Many dilemmas are also written as dealing with:

- Primacy of the interests of one party over the other (client or group)
- Distribution in one way or other (merit or equal share)
- Obligation of one to another (duty, custom, legal obligation)
- Responsibility to client, colleague, profession, employer, society etc.

Some cases may be also deal with:

- Best interest of client v. obligation to do no harm
- Quality of life v. prolonging of life
- Client self-determination v. obligation to prevent harm
- Right to confidentiality v. autonomy
- Effectiveness of service v. client privacy

What values are at stake?

Explore the relevant values in the authorities' literature of the case. Individuals may validate their basic ethical values from such sources as laws, social science research, and the Bible or other holy books.

- Some of the issues concerning values are:
The right or wrong of an action.
- The acceptance, reputation or embarrassment of an action.
- Qualification and disqualification of a person, with reasons.
- Virtues such as integrity, love, forgiveness, respect, purity, trust, sanctity of life.

What principles are at stake?

Select the relevant principles that apply to the case and explain the reasoning process that you used to arrive at a tentative solution.

- Some relevant principle may be:
Protection of life etc.
- Conflict avoidance
- Greatest good of group, etc.
- Truth telling
- Acceptance of faith/belief command
- Accountability

What personal issues are at stake?

Consider what personal issues of people or populations may affect the outcome of the case to such an extent that a particular ethical position is required. Reconsider your tentative solution in light of the personal issues involved and suggest a final solution.

In some cases, the loyalty for one group takes precedence over the loyalty to another group. Some groups include the:

- Victim
- Family
- Employer
- Profession
- Community

How will you deal with these 10 cases?

Use each of the above four steps to analyze the following cases, describe your reasoning, and reach a solution.

Case Worksheet

1. Definition: a. _____ v. b. _____
2. Values for a _____
b _____
3. Principles for a _____
b _____
4. Personal issues for a _____
b _____
5. Reasoning and solution: _____ circle a / b

Two orphans: Two sisters, Ann (age 6) and Bev (14), who live in foster care must leave the place. They have very different problems, Ann is physically handicapped, Bev is mentally handicapped. Should the sisters be placed together or separately?

Wanting to die: Mrs. Klimov (age 33) wants to stop her difficult cancer treatment and wants to die. She has a ten-year old son, who can be taken care of by her mother. Her mother says she is too young to die and considers it suicide. She was named her daughter's Advance Directive (medical decision maker) and refuses to let her daughter stop the treatment.

Adoption: Mary (age 15) was adopted 12 years ago and now wants to know who her birth-parents are. The records are sealed. Her adopted parents do not want her to meet her extremely poor birth-parents for they feel that it will upset her too much and that she may want to leave them.

Computer Records: To be more efficient, Pastor Jones places his confidential home visitation records on his officer computer. That will make record-keeping easier and he could visit more homes. While at present he is the only one with access to that computer, it would be easy for anyone to access the information when he is not in the office, that is usually unlocked. It could compromise the records.

Cultural Differences: Mr. Kim has emigrated from Korea some 3 years ago and joins the Washington Writer's Society. He speaks and writes very good English but has many problems adopting to the rules of the Society, which seem very strange to him. All his practices are acceptable in Korea, but not in Washington. The Society is considering if it can keep Mr. Kim as member because his presence disrupts the Society.

Organizational Mission: Joe, age 25, comes to a social worker at JKM, an organization that serves and supports homosexuals. He requests help in becoming heterosexual. JKM does not have a program for that and does not advocate sexual-orientation changes.

Suicide: Bill, age 45, has been abused as a child and has recently lost his wife. He is very depressed and visits his only friend, a male nurse. He threatens suicide. His friend thinks that he will get over it and tries to motivate him to living. He could also commit him to a clinic for treatment. Next day Bill commits suicide.

Family: Henry, age 95, is keen of mind but feeble, lives alone and wants to stay living alone. He sometimes falls, but has not injured himself seriously. His daughter is concerned and wants him to come live with her. He refuses to move.

Rape Report: Jane, age 16, was raped by a neighbor and comes to tell her teacher she trusts. She asks the teacher not to tell anyone about that. The teacher feels that reporting it to the police and the investigation may be worse than the rape itself. Reporting may also place Jane's life in danger.

Tasha's Baby: Tasha, age 23, is single and 3 month pregnant. She uses drugs that endanger her fetus. Her mother tries to persuade her to give up drugs. She refuses. She also refuses to go see a doctor for she feels that the doctor will make her feel bad about her drug-use.