LESSON 9

ANALYZING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

"Minds are like parachutes—they only function when they are open."

—Dick Sutphen

Analyzing Ethical Dilemmas

Prework for students: The reading "Analyzing Right-versus-Right Ethical Dilemmas" and one of the worksheet assignments from Lesson 8.

Objective

By the end of this lesson, students will understand the concept of an ethical dilemma as being a conflict of right versus right and be able to give at least one example for each of the four dilemma paradigms.

Opening

"Read Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken.' What does it mean?"

Strategies

- Before class, read the Tips for Teachers included in this lesson.
- After the opening discussion, review the idea of right-versus-right dilemmas. If the class is having difficulty grasping the right-versus-right concept, continue using the Role Play activity. Otherwise, you might go right to the Fish Bowl activity to practice identifying the paradigm (or paradigms) that fits best for each story.
- Be sure to go over several examples, since a second purpose for the exercise is to share the content of these real-life scenarios.
- Notebooks: Ask students to reflect on the idea of a right-versus-right dilemma: Is the process helpful?

Reflection Questions

- Why are some decisions harder than others? Give an example of a really hard decision.
- For each right-versus-right dilemma example discussed, ask:
    - Whose dilemma is it?
    - What happened?
    - What is the context?
    - What are the two rights?
    - Why is each choice right?
    - What right-versus-right paradigm, or paradigms, does each example most resemble?

Closure and Transition

"It is not enough simply to understand that a dilemma is a conflict between two rights. In the end, the highest right must be determined and a decision made. Next we will look at three possible ways to go about resolving right-versus-right dilemmas."

Homework Assignment

In preparation for Lesson 10, ask students to read "Resolving Right-versus-Right Dilemmas," found in Lesson 10.

Lesson Assessment: Revisions for Next Time

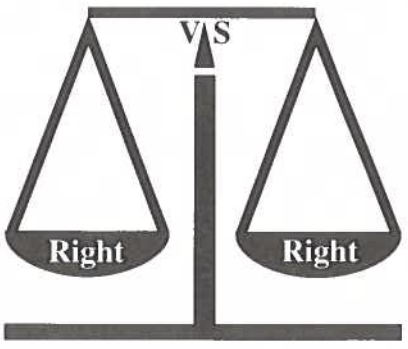
Analyzing Right-versus-Right Ethical Dilemmas

- *You learn, during a private conversation after school, that a member of your community-service-learning class lives in a homeless shelter. The person who tells you swears you to secrecy. The very next day, during service-learning class, another student suggests that the class pursue a project involving the homeless shelter. Should you take that classmate aside and tell what you know, or keep it to yourself?*

- *You and a group of other students have worked hard to plan a special school open house to raise money for the school. A few weeks before the event, the sports boosters club, run mostly by adults, gets involved and begins to take over organizing the event. Should you and your friends confront them about taking over or go along with them?*

- *At a picnic given by your employer for all of the company's employees, you suspect that your supervisor—who is also a friend—has had a bit too much to drink. As you're walking home after the party, he stops his car and asks if you'd like a ride home. Do you refuse his offer, perhaps jeopardizing the friendship, or take a chance on not getting home safely?*

Perhaps you have faced a tough decision such as those described above. These tough decisions—which we call *ethical dilemmas*—typically are not questions of right versus wrong, such as those described in the previous lesson. Rather, they are *right-versus-right* dilemmas, in which two of the core values on our personal code of ethics come into conflict.



In a right-versus-right dilemma, there is some right on both sides, but you can't do both. The challenge is to figure out which side is the "higher" right.

Before thinking about how to solve the problem, though, it is important to understand what, exactly, the problem is all about—this process is called *ethical analysis.* Ethical analysis involves asking questions, such as:

- Whose problem is it anyway? Who is the *actor?*
- What are the critical facts that come into play in this situation?
- Does my dilemma pass the four right-versus-wrong tests?
- Which of my ethical values are coming into conflict? What are the two rights?
- Why are they in conflict? Why is each one right in some way?

Let's take the first example, in which you know that another student lives in a homeless shelter. In this story, *you* are the actor because you are the one who has to decide whether or not to do something, to take some *personal responsibility* for the situation.

First, ask: Is this really a right-versus-right dilemma, or is it simply a question of right versus wrong?

- **Is it illegal to either tell or not tell?** No, it's not a question of the law.
- **Do I have a gut feeling that either action is the wrong thing to do?** No, there is something to be said for telling and for not telling.
- **How would you feel if your decision appeared on the front page of the local newspaper?** Well, on the surface either way might sound okay with some explanation.
- **What would your favorite role models do in a similar circumstance?** Probably they would see this as a real dilemma, too.

So, if we cannot say definitely that one side is clearly right and the other clearly wrong, we have a *right-versus-right* ethical dilemma. What are the two rights that you face?

- It is right, on the one hand, to tell the student suggesting the homeless shelter project that another student in class lives there. After all, this is the truth and, if the student knew the truth, perhaps she would quietly withdraw her suggestion to avoid embarrassing the student who lives at the shelter.
- It is right, on the other hand, not to say anything at all because the person who told you in the first place asked you to keep it secret, and you must be loyal to your promises. Besides, is it really your place to interfere?

In this example, the right-versus-right dilemma you face is of the *truth-versus-loyalty* type. The idea of truth versus loyalty as a way of describing your ethical dilemma is called a *paradigm*. A paradigm is a relatively simple way to help explain facts or events that appear to be complicated.

Four Dilemma Paradigms

We find, generally, that right-versus-right dilemmas, however difficult, typically reduce themselves to one or more of the following four paradigms:

- truth versus loyalty;
- self versus community;
- short term versus long term; and
- justice versus mercy.

TRUTH VS LOYALTY

As in the previous example, this paradigm is about being honest versus keeping one's promises. In practice, the most common kind of truth in truth-versus-loyalty dilemmas is based on accurately reporting the facts. This, in turn, tends to promote trust and a moral society in general. Loyalty, by contrast, focuses not on statements of fact but on perceptions of allegiance —allegiance to a friend, a group, or a set of ideas.

Consider two more examples:

- *You know that your best friend's boyfriend is cheating on her, but she is totally unaware of this. Should you tell her about it or not interfere?*

- *You observe another student stealing supplies from your service-learning work site. The next day the site supervisor calls you into her office and asks: "Do you know who stole our supplies?" What should you say?*

SELF VS COMMUNITY

This second dilemma paradigm places the interests of the individual, standing alone, against those of the individual as part of a larger entity—the community. Or it could be about the interests of a small group compared to those of some other, larger group.

Whistleblowers face this type of dilemma when trying to decide whether or not to report a problem in the workplace (or at school). If I blow the whistle to protect the community as a whole, what will happen to me? Will I be rejected by my friends? Will I lose my job? But if I don't blow the whistle, what will that mean for the health and safety of the world in which I live? Also, what if I blow the whistle, but I am wrong?

What would you do in these cases?

- *Your science class has been working on a river cleanup project for several months, when the group discovers that toxic waste from a factory upriver is polluting the water. Your parents, and the parents of some of the other students, happen to work and earn their living at that very same factory. Should the group report the company for these illegal activities or should they quietly approach the factory owners about what they have found?*

- *Your parents tell you the family will be moving to a different state next year. You'd rather finish your senior year in your current community, and a neighbor has offered to let you stay with them. Should you move with your family, as they would prefer, or stay with your friends, which you'd rather do?*

SHORT TERM VS LONG TERM

Here, the immediate, survival requirements of the present oppose the need for a safe and secure future. If we don't feed ourselves today, we won't live to see tomorrow. But we must plan ahead for tomorrow, perhaps even making some sacrifices today, if we are to guarantee a reasonable "today" for ourselves and others in the future. Some examples:

- *You have been saving for college for many years. Now that you are 16, you want to get a job and put more money toward this goal. However, you will need transportation to get to and from work. It will be easier to get there if you have a car, although it's possible to get there by bus. Should you dip into the college account in order to buy a car or just use the bus?*

- *Your service-learning group is trying to select a project. The problem being addressed is litter in a particular neighborhood. Litter is everywhere, but the real problem is that city officials continue to ignore the general decay of buildings, roads, and bridges in the area. Should your group organize a massive cleanup effort to collect and get rid of all the trash on the street, or should they begin a time-consuming process to request more city involvement in the neighborhood?*

JUSTICE VS MERCY

This paradigm is about the conflict between fairness and equal treatment of everyone on the one hand, and compassion and understanding of special circumstances on the other. Do we treat everyone alike with no exceptions? Or do we look at each situation separately and treat each individual in a personal, caring way? Some examples of justice-versus-mercy dilemmas are:

- *While walking in your neighborhood one day, you notice the local dogcatcher's truck coming down the street. He has picked up a homeless puppy and stops to ask you if you know to whom it belongs. You've never seen the puppy before. He says that the puppy will have to be put to sleep if the owner can't be found. Should you offer to take the puppy home even though you are not sure you have time to care for it, or should you let the dogcatcher carry out the law?*

- *As a peer mentor, you have been working during school hours with a group of fourth graders to help improve their reading ability. After four weeks, their classroom teacher asks you to fill out a report on how each student is doing. Students who are progressing satisfactorily will remain in the small group. Those who are not improving enough will be referred to after-school tutoring. One student has clearly been working very hard and has shown some improvement, but has not quite reached the standard set by the teacher. You know that the student will be disappointed if he has to stay after school for more help. Should you give the student a satisfactory rating or not?*

To gain practice in identifying the "rights" that are in conflict, try thinking about the dilemma examples in this reading. Each of these is a real-life situation shared by someone like you. In the next reading, you will learn more about how to resolve right-versus-right ethical dilemmas once they have been analyzed. True ethical dilemmas are difficult to resolve. Sometimes the right resolution is the tough and unrewarded one.

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

—*Robert Frost*

Right-versus-Right Decision Paradigms

truth vs. loyalty

self vs. community

short term vs. long term

justice vs. mercy

Questions for Analyzing an Ethical Dilemma

- Who is the actor?
- What happened?
- What is the context?
- What are the two rights?
- Why is each choice right?
- What dilemma paradigm(s) fits this case?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Make sure students can identify the actor and clearly state the relevant facts of every dilemma before proceeding to the next steps.

- After the students have started to get comfortable with the idea of the four paradigms, suggest that they try to state each right-versus-right dilemma in the following way: "It is right, on the one hand, to . . . ; it is right, on the other hand, to . . . ." This is not easily done, but serves to reinforce the concept of right versus right and to prevent students from talking about wrong versus wrong, a common tendency. Take the following examples from the homework reading ("Analyzing Right-versus-Right Ethical Dilemmas"):

  Re: the puppy example under justice versus mercy: It is right, on the one hand, to show mercy for the puppy by offering to take it home. If you don't, it will have to be put to sleep. It is right, on the other hand, to let the dogcatcher do his job and follow the law. You are not really prepared to take care of the animal, and, besides, you can't care for all the homeless puppies in the world.

  Re: telling a classmate that another classmate lives in a homeless shelter, under truth versus loyalty: It is right, on the one hand, to tell what you know because you don't want the student who lives in a shelter to be embarrassed. It is right, on the other hand, not to tell because you promised not to tell, and is it really your role to share that information?

- Ask students if they think any of the dilemma examples involve more than one dilemma paradigm. For example, in the dilemma in which the student must decide whether to finish her senior year at her current high school or move with her family to another state, some students may view it as a long-term–versus–short-term or truth-versus-loyalty dilemma as well as a self-versus-community decision. However, the two "it is right" statements will generally suggest which paradigm is dominant. Identifying paradigms is a very creative activity—you might be surprised to see the ways students summarize what is going on.

- During this lesson, it is important to try to keep from speculating as to what decision should be made and why. This type of digression can take away from learning the concept of right versus right. The value of the analysis process is that it causes us to look more deeply into the underlying factors of a dilemma and prevents a too-hasty jump to finding a solution.

- *A note on linking the class values list to the four paradigms*: We say that right-versus-right ethical dilemmas occur when two of the values on our code of ethics come into conflict. We also suggest that there are four dilemma paradigms, or general cases, in which values come into conflict: truth versus loyalty, short term versus long term, self versus community, and justice versus mercy.

  It is very possible that a student may confront you with the following questions: "Why don't the values in the four dilemma paradigms match our list of values? Why is 'short term' about ethical values? Or 'self'? What is the connection?"

  The paradigm labels are only one way of expressing the concepts embodied therein. For example, another way of saying "self versus community" is "freedom versus responsibility." Another way of saying "truth versus loyalty" is "honesty versus respect for promises." "Short term versus long term" could be "respect (or responsibility) for the present versus respect (or responsibility) for the future." And "justice versus mercy" more commonly is interpreted as pitting "fairness" against "compassion." You might want to let students brainstorm other ways of saying the four paradigms.

Role Play

Purpose

- To help students visualize dilemma scenarios and understand the perspective of the person who has the dilemma

Preparation and Materials

Review the dilemmas outlined in the reading, "Analyzing Right-versus-Right Ethical Dilemmas," and those included in the Dilemma Examples section included with this lesson to familiarize yourself with the options. Decide whether you will ask students to volunteer for this assignment or divide the class into groups and have each group present to the entire class. If the entire class participates, allow two full class periods for the activity.

Process

- Select dilemmas for role playing.
- Ask each group to provide the following information in a brief paragraph before they begin to prepare the role playing: Identify the actor (whose dilemma is this?), state the relevant facts (what is the context?), state the two rights ("it is right on the one hand to . . . ; it is right on the other hand to . . . "), and identify the paradigm or paradigms that fit. See the overhead Questions for Analyzing an Ethical Dilemma.
- Provide adequate time for students to prepare for the role playing. Suggest they find a way to set the stage for the rest of the class prior to beginning the role playing; for example, a narrator might describe the setting and everything that has transpired up to the moment being acted out. A narrator also might be used to summarize key points during and after the role playing, such as what the two rights are that come into conflict.
- In this lesson we are only interested in stating the two rights that conflict and finding the best paradigm, or paradigms, to explain the dilemma. So remind students to role play only up to the moment the dilemma is defined. Promise that in the next lesson, when a method for deciding dilemmas will be considered, they will return to the same story and role play possible solutions.

Fish Bowl

Purpose

- To model a process for analyzing ethical dilemmas prior to assigning students to small-group work.

Preparation and Materials

Select one of the more straightforward dilemmas from the Dilemma Examples section of this lesson for this modeling activity. Consider ahead of time which students you will select for the demonstration. Read the Tips for Teachers included in this lesson.

Process

The fish-bowl technique involves using one small group of students to demonstrate a process of thinking and working to the rest of the class. Once the fish-bowl activity has been completed, all students should be prepared to follow the same process in small groups without the close attention of the teacher.

- Identify the students (four or five) who will be "in" the fish bowl and ask them to come together at the front of the room or, even better, in a small circle in the middle of the room. Make sure all remaining students are able to observe the activity closely.
- Tell those not in the fish bowl that their role is one of observation rather than participation. Advise them that you, too, will only observe unless the process gets off track. Remind them of the purpose of the exercise.
- Pass out copies of the dilemma you have selected to all class members and give them a few minutes to read and understand the story.
- After the fish-bowl group identifies the actor in the dilemma and has considered all relevant facts, ask the members of the group to discuss and come to a conclusion about the answers to the following three questions:
  - —First, does the dilemma pass the four right-versus-wrong tests?
  - —If so, how can the two rights be stated? (It is right, on the one hand, to . . . ; it is right, on the other hand, to . . . .)
  - —And, finally, which of the four dilemma paradigms applies?
- Your role in the fish-bowl exercise is one of coach. Only intrude into the discussion if the small group seems to be getting off track, in which case it is important to let the class as a whole understand how that happened and what should have

happened instead. Also, be sure the exercise moves along at a reasonable pace, allowing perhaps ten minutes for the entire activity.

- When the fish-bowl activity has been completed, give your demonstration group a round of applause, and immediately send all students into their small groups to practice the same process on another dilemma.
- Bring the students back together as a large group and solicit feedback from each small group on the decisions they reached.

D I L E M M A

POLLUTION PREDICAMENT

As part of their community service requirement, a group of students decides to study water-pollution levels in a river near their school, where people fish and swim. Every week they take samples from the stream back to school and analyze them in the school lab. From the very beginning they detect significant amounts of pollution that appear to indicate leaks from nearby household septic systems.

When they inquire what it would mean for home owners to fix the problem, they are surprised to learn that it can take thousands of dollars to repair a septic-system leak, since the entire system often needs to be replaced. The students know that the families in this neighborhood are unable to afford such high costs. How should they proceed? If the students blow the whistle, it may mean great hardship for these families. On the other hand, if they don't, what will that mean for the river, the people who spend time there, and the general health of the environment?

WHAT KIND OF DILEMMA IS THIS?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] TRUTH VS. LOYALTY

[ ] SELF VS. COMMUNITY

[ ] SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM

[ ] JUSTICE VS. MERCY

WHAT SHOULD THE STUDENTS DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If the students reported the sewage problem, what do you think would happen?

_____

On the other hand, if the students didn't do anything, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that the students might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If the students followed the rule that seems best, what action would they take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If the students put themselves in the position of each of the others, what would they do?

If _____ is the other, they would _____
If _____ is the other, they would _____
If _____ is the other, they would _____

So, the students should do the following: _____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

DILEMMA

WHOSE PROJECT IS THIS ANYWAY?

As part of their community service project, a small group of students from Pioneer High School volunteer to plan the revitalization of a local public park. Their community service advisor is enthusiastic about the idea since the park has been neglected for years and the town really needs a central place of beauty for recreation. The students envision overseeing some simple landscaping projects, fundraising for playground equipment and park benches, and building a trail for joggers and walkers.

After finalizing their ideas on paper, the next step is to introduce the plan to the town council. Again they receive enthusiastic support, and the council creates a special committee of adult community volunteers to work with the students.

That's where the trouble begins, because once the adult committee is formed, they begin to take over the project. Not only do they set meeting times and then change them in such a way that the students are left out, but the concept of the park changes in a way that is not at all like the original plan. The students are feeling very discouraged, especially since the community service advisor is unsympathetic to their complaints. Should they abandon the project to the adults and let it come out differently from what they want, or should they speak up and risk losing adult support and the town council's approval?

WHAT KIND OF DILEMMA IS THIS?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] TRUTH VS. LOYALTY

[ ] SELF VS. COMMUNITY

[ ] SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM

[ ] JUSTICE VS. MERCY

WHAT SHOULD THE STUDENTS DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If the students simply let the adults take over, what do you think would happen?

_____

If they objected openly to what the adults are doing, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that the students might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If the students followed the rule that seems best, what action would they take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If the students put themselves in the position of each of the others, what would they do?

If _____ is the other, they would _____
If _____ is the other, they would _____
If _____ is the other, they would _____

So, the students should do the following: _____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

DILEMMA

JOHN'S FARM JAM

John has recently graduated from high school. He plans to enroll in college next year, but for now he is working on a large animal breeding farm located near a small river in his town.

John knows that the farm's animal waste is stored in large, on-site lagoons, and that periodically the waste is removed and sprayed as fertilizer on fields that are used to grow crops. He has recently read about lagoon spills into aquatic systems that have caused environmental damage and economic hardships to others.

One day John notices that the farm's main lagoon is leaking animal waste into the river. He believes that, as a result, some environmental damage will occur and the problem will intensify if nothing is done. John approaches the farm owner—a man he respects—with his concerns. In reply, the farmer points out the long hours and financial responsibility of managing a large animal breeding farm and describes the rising costs and smaller profit margins under which the farm is being forced to operate.

The farmer does not volunteer to fix the leakage problem; rather, he makes it clear that such repairs would create a hardship for him. Should John keep quiet about the problem or take the next step and inform the local Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) inspector?

WHAT KIND OF DILEMMA IS THIS?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] TRUTH VS. LOYALTY
[ ] SELF VS. COMMUNITY
[ ] SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM
[ ] JUSTICE VS. MERCY

WHAT SHOULD JOHN DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If John informed the local EPA inspector, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

On the other hand, if he kept quiet, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that John might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If John followed the rule that seems best, what action would he take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If John put himself in the position of each of the others, what would he do?

If _____ is the other, he would _____

If _____ is the other, he would _____

If _____ is the other, he would _____

So, John should do the following: _____

_____

_____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

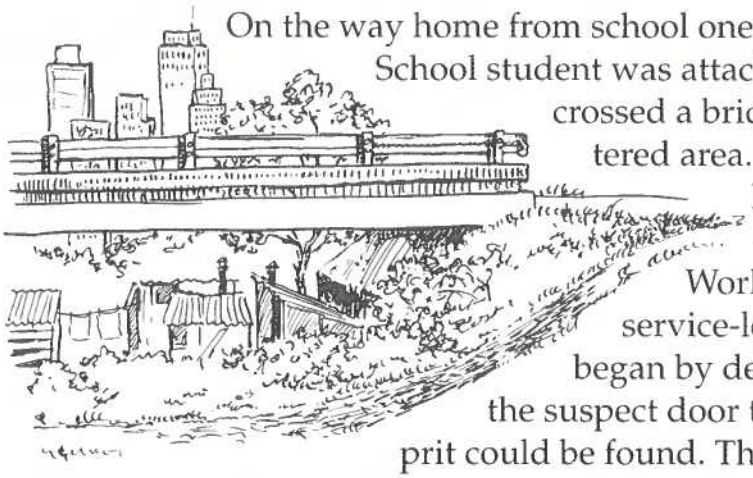
_____

_____

_____

D I L E M M A

SAFETY FIRST?



On the way home from school one day, a Mission High School student was attacked and raped as she crossed a bridge through a densely littered area. Students at Mission High decided, as a result, to do something about it. Working with the school's service-learning coordinator, they began by delivering descriptions of the suspect door to door to see if the culprit could be found. Then they decided to make the pathway near the bridge safer for all students by cleaning up the area, painting over graffiti, and clearing up the dense brush that hid a number of things from view.

But as they were planning the cleanup, they realized that one of the things hidden from view by the bushes was a homeless campsite. If they cleaned everything out, they wonder, what would that mean for the shelter and privacy of these street dwellers? Where would they go if the students cleaned up the area? Most important, is it right to blame all the homeless people living under the bridge for the actions of one person?

WHAT KIND OF DILEMMA IS THIS?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] TRUTH VS. LOYALTY

[ ] SELF VS. COMMUNITY

[ ] SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM

[ ] JUSTICE VS. MERCY

WHAT SHOULD THE STUDENTS DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If the students cleared the bushes from the bridge area, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

If they didn't clear the area, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that the students might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If the students followed the rule that seems best, what action would they take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If the students put themselves in the position of each of the others, what would they do?

If _____ is the other, they would _____

If _____ is the other, they would _____

If _____ is the other, they would _____

So, the students should do the following: _____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

D I L E M M A

Too Much, Too Little

Adam, a student at Millville Middle School, went one afternoon a week to a nearby elementary school, where he helped a small group of first graders improve their reading skills. Most weeks his job included reading through an assigned story with the students, giving each a chance to practice reading out loud, and leading a discussion on the content of the story.

There were five children in Adam's reading group, and one of them, Seth, seemed always to be talking—asking questions, answering Adam's questions, bubbling away with ideas. He just seemed to dominate the group. Janelle, on the other hand, was just the opposite. She never spoke unless spoken to and was very shy around the other students.

Adam realized, on the one hand, that he wanted to be supportive of Seth, whose natural curiosity would go a long way to helping him continue to grow and succeed in school; on the other hand, if Adam were to give Janelle, and the others, more opportunities to participate, he definitely would need to suppress some of Seth's enthusiasm.

What kind of dilemma is this?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] Truth vs. Loyalty

[ ] Self vs. Community

[ ] Short Term vs. Long Term

[ ] Justice vs. Mercy

WHAT SHOULD ADAM DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If Adam let things continue as they are, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

If, on the other hand, he suppressed some of Seth's enthusiasm to give others more opportunity to participate, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that Adam might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If Adam followed the rule that seems best, what action would he take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If Adam put himself in the position of each of the others, what would he do?

If _____ is the other, he would _____

If _____ is the other, he would _____

If _____ is the other, he would _____

So, Adam should do the following: _____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

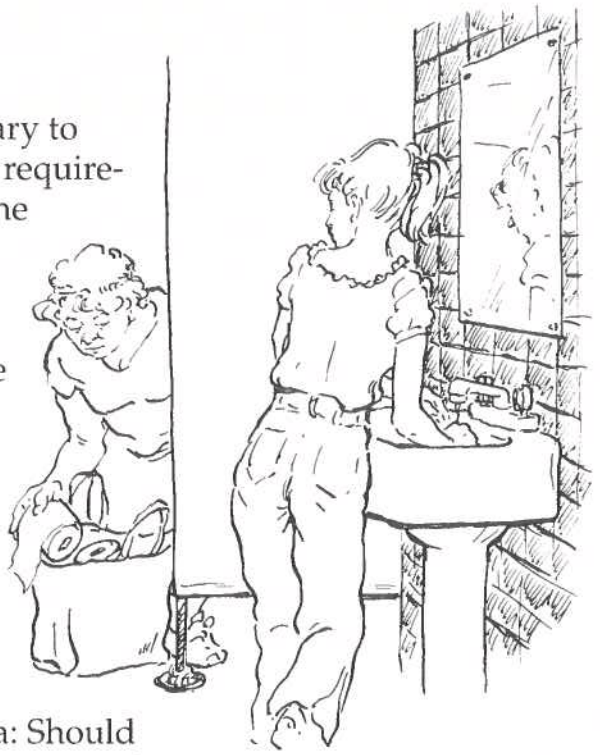
_____

_____

_____

DILEMMA

A Question of Need



Trish is an eighth-grade student who decided to volunteer at the town library to meet her school's community service requirement. The job was varied and fun—she stacked books, answered the phone on occasion, helped young children find what they wanted, and so on. The library staff valued her assistance because they were understaffed. In fact, Trish knew that the library was struggling to meet other expenses, too, such as the cost of supplies, new books, and repairs.

One day, while Trish was in the rest room, she saw a homeless woman stealing supplies. To Trish, the situation posed a serious dilemma: Should she confront the woman (perhaps even report her for stealing) because the library could not afford to allow people to take their supplies, or should she turn a blind eye, since the woman was so clearly in need?

What kind of dilemma is this?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] Truth vs. Loyalty

[ ] Self vs. Community

[ ] Short Term vs. Long Term

[ ] Justice vs. Mercy

WHAT SHOULD TRISH DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If Trish confronted the homeless woman, what do you think would happen? ___

If she reported her, what do you think would happen? ___

On the other hand, if she did nothing, what do you think would happen?

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? ___

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the rules of action that Trish might follow? List as many as you can.

1)___
2)___
3)___
4)___

Which of these seems best in this case? ___

If Trish followed the rule that seems best, what action would she take? ___

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? ___

If Trish put herself in the position of each of the others, what would she do?

If ___ is the other, she would ___
If ___ is the other, she would ___
If ___ is the other, she would ___

So, Trish should do the following: ___

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. ___

In the end, what would you do and why? ___

D I L E M M A

Delayed Dilemma

Austin was involved in a service-learning project at school that was not going well. What his group had originally wanted to accomplish was to repair and paint all 20 benches scattered around the campus of Southwest High. Well, things had unfolded more slowly than expected: First, they couldn't find the right tools; next, donations of materials from local hardware stores were slow in coming; and, finally, the whole project had been delayed until the principal could find time to meet with them and approve their plans.

In fact, the semester was now about over, and if Austin and his friends really wanted to finish the project, they would have to put in a couple of long Saturdays, on their own time. Austin felt, on the one hand, that it would be right for him to donate a couple of Saturdays to finish the work; on the other hand, he didn't feel that he, or his fellow students, were responsible for the delays, so why should he sacrifice his limited personal leisure time?

What kind of dilemma is this?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] Truth vs. Loyalty
[ ] Self vs. Community
[ ] Short Term vs. Long Term
[ ] Justice vs. Mercy

WHAT SHOULD AUSTIN DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If Austin decided to donate some of his personal time to the project, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

If, on the other hand, he stopped working on the project as soon as the semester is over, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that Austin might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If Austin followed the rule that seems best, what action would he take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If Austin put himself in the position of each of the others, what would he do?

If _____ is the other, he would _____

If _____ is the other, he would _____

If _____ is the other, he would _____

So, Austin should do the following: _____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

_____

_____

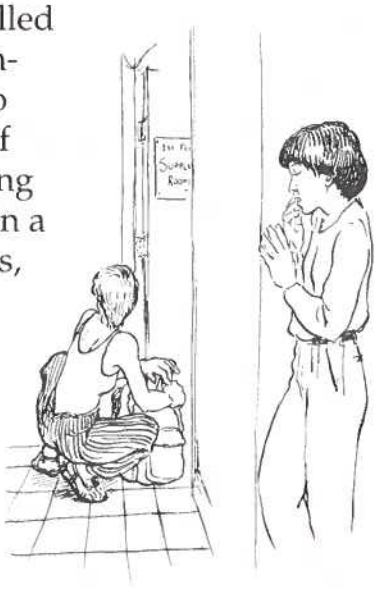
_____

D I L E M M A

When Somebody Else's Right-vs.-Wrong Decision Puts *You* in a Right-vs.-Right Dilemma!

Community service is a requirement at Western High School. To graduate, a student must complete at least 40 hours of volunteer service in the community during his or her senior year. Many local nonprofit organizations are delighted to have assistance from the students.

Lisa and Toni have both chosen to work as candy stripers at the town hospital. They are not close friends—in fact, they come from entirely different backgrounds—but they are assigned to the same unit at the same time every week. As candy stripers, Lisa and Toni get called upon to do a number of things, such as sorting laundered goods, putting away supplies, and reading to patients. Neither Lisa nor Toni has ever been part of such a large operation before. In fact, it's eye-opening to see how many supplies a hospital goes through in a very short period of time. Disposable gloves, tissues, water bottles, gowns—the list goes on and on.



One afternoon, Lisa sees Toni exiting the supply closet with a small pile of supplies. She sees Toni stuff these items into her backpack and walk out the door. Lisa knows that Toni did not have permission to take the property home. She also knows that Toni did not see her. Should she report what she observed or not?

What kind of dilemma is this?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

because _____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] Truth vs. Loyalty
[ ] Self vs. Community
[ ] Short Term vs. Long Term
[ ] Justice vs. Mercy

WHAT SHOULD LISA DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If Lisa reported to her supervisor that Toni has taken some supplies, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

If she didn't report her, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that Lisa might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If Lisa followed the rule that seems best, what action would she take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If Lisa put herself in the position of each of the others, what would she do?

If _____ is the other, she would _____

If _____ is the other, she would _____

If _____ is the other, she would _____

So, Lisa should do the following: _____

_____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

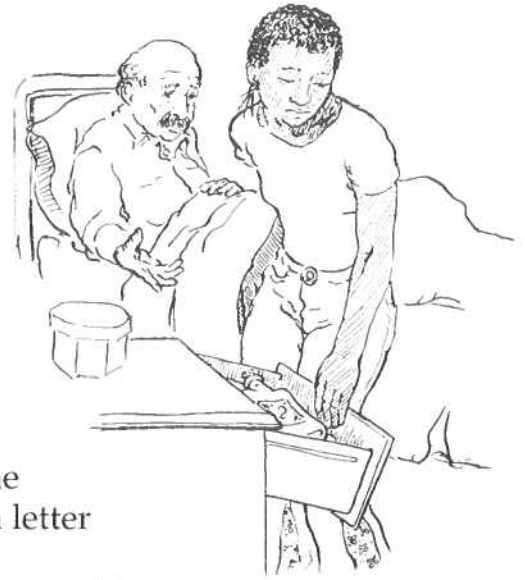
_____

_____

_____

DILEMMA

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY?



Sandra has just started volunteering at a local nursing home. Unlike many young people, Sandra has always enjoyed the company of older people. She feels that older people have a lot to offer and often have an interesting perspective on life.

Sandra volunteers two afternoons a week after school, and has become acquainted with most of the residents. Her duties are varied: Sometimes she reads to residents, sometimes she cleans up after crafts projects, and sometimes she performs simple favors, such as writing a letter or dialing a number on the telephone.

One afternoon Sandra is delivering the "weekly activities" newsletter to each of the residents' rooms. When she gets to Mr. G's room, he asks her if she will help him retrieve something. (Mr. G is confined to his bed and cannot get around.) "Sure," Sandra offers, "What would you like me to get for you?" "Over there," responds Mr. G, "in that drawer you will find a bottle. Please bring it to me."

Sandra opens the drawer and sees the bottle Mr. G is referring to: a liquor bottle. She knows that alcohol is against the rules for most patients. Even if it is allowed, *she* certainly isn't supposed to be handling liquor. On the other hand, she feels sorry for Mr. G and knows he has few enough pleasures in life. Should she do as he asks, or not?

WHAT KIND OF DILEMMA IS THIS?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

because _____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] TRUTH VS. LOYALTY
[ ] SELF VS. COMMUNITY
[ ] SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM
[ ] JUSTICE VS. MERCY

WHAT SHOULD SANDRA DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If Sandra got the bottle for Mr. G, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

If she refused to do so, on the other hand, what do you think would happen? ___

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that Sandra might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If Sandra followed the rule that seems best, what action would she take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If Sandra put herself in the position of each of the others, what would she do?

If _____ is the other, she would _____

If _____ is the other, she would _____

If _____ is the other, she would _____

So, Sandra should do the following: _____

_____

_____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

D I L E M M A

Fast Food Friends

As part of a nutrition unit in health class, some students plan an informational campaign highlighting the dangers of eating too much fat. First, they bring in food labels from their favorite snack foods and compare information by brand name, serving size, and total fat grams. To graphically demonstrate the fat content of selected foods, they use lard, weighing out an equivalent amount to represent the fat grams found in each of the foods. Second, they design posters to display the results: For each food item, a plastic bag of lard is attached to the poster. Items are then labeled "high fat" or "low fat." The final part of the plan is to distribute these posters to various community sites—the YMCA, the local hospital, other schools, and perhaps some of the restaurants around town.

The problem comes in deciding which snacks to include. Should they include, for example, familiar items from local fast food chains? Certainly these snacks are very popular with students of all ages, and it is important for everyone to know which ones are high in fat and which are relatively healthy. But on the other hand, most of these businesses are very supportive of student activities, donating both money and products in support of various school-sponsored events. They also are an important source of job opportunities. Would it be disrespectful to highlight their products as being high in fat and, therefore, not very healthy?

What kind of dilemma is this?

First, state the two rights that come into conflict:

It is right, on the one hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

It is right, on the other hand, to _____

_____

_____

because _____

_____

Then choose the dilemma paradigm (or paradigms) that fits.

[ ] Truth vs. Loyalty
[ ] Self vs. Community
[ ] Short Term vs. Long Term
[ ] Justice vs. Mercy

WHAT SHOULD THE STUDENTS DO?

ENDS-BASED APPROACH

If the students included fast foods offered by local businesses on their list, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

If they did not include these products, what do you think would happen? _____

_____

What is the greatest good for the greatest number? _____

_____

RULE-BASED APPROACH

What are some of the possible rules of action that the students might follow? List as many as you can.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Which of these seems best in this case? _____

If the students followed the rule that seems best, what action would they take? _____

_____

CARE-BASED APPROACH

Who are the "others" in this situation? _____

_____

If the students put themselves in the position of each of the others, what would they do?

If _____ is the other, they would _____

If _____ is the other, they would _____

If _____ is the other, they would _____

So, the students should do the following: _____

_____

IS THERE A THIRD WAY OUT?

[ ] YES [ ] NO

If so, explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

In the end, what would you do and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

Subject Adaptation Suggestions

History and Social Studies

- Ask students to bring copies of the local/regional/state newspaper to class. Provide them with time to scan the papers for right-versus-right (and right-versus-wrong) situations. As a group, discuss the stories they find: What is the decision to be made? Whose decision is it? What kind of dilemma is involved? For homework, have students write up the dilemmas.

Language Arts

- Have students write up a right-versus-right dilemma, either from their own experiences or from the experience of someone they know. Students should identify the decision maker or actor, describe the facts of the case and the context, state the two rights that come into conflict, and provide an opinion about which dilemma paradigm is involved and why.

Math and Science

- Just because scientific and technological advances allow us to do something, are we compelled to do it? For example, we are rapidly developing the capability to clone human beings. Should we continue to pursue this scientific exploration on to its logical conclusion? Or, should we consider the possibility that continuing down this path may be unadvisable? At what point should ethics leverage technology, rather than the reverse?

Visual Arts

- Ask students to bring an example of an ethical dilemma to class. Have them illustrate the two right choices involved in the dilemma, with a brief accompanying paragraph or two about the nature of the dilemma and the two right-versus-right statements.

- As you study these concepts, you might want to have students create a series of posters or a mural that depicts each of the dilemma paradigms (e.g., truth versus loyalty). These paradigms are highly conceptual and will pose a substantial challenge to even your most talented artists.