LESSON 5

DEFINING SHARED VALUES

"I think this is a long, slow exploration to discover common ground."

—John W. Gardner

DEFINING SHARED VALUES

Prework for participants: Ask participants to read Chapter 4 in *How Good People Make Tough Choices* and the *Shared Values* reading by John Gardner. Request that the Defining Values worksheet also be completed for this session.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the difference between ethical values and other kinds of values
2. Describe the difference between law and ethics
3. Identify the important features of a code of ethics

OPENING

Read either the poem, "Traveling Through the Dark," or the story, "Shay's Home Run." Ask participants to identify the underlying values of the individual(s) in the poem or story. What is the function of these values? Explain to the class, "Today we will identify different types of values, explore our moral values, and begin a process of creating a code of ethics, or shared values, for this group."

STRATEGIES

NOTE: Lessons 5 and 6 comprise an interactive process through which a group can begin to develop and define a set of shared values. The process works best with a group of 20–25 participants, but can be effective with larger or smaller groups. The steps described in this lesson's activities, Defining Key Terms and Building a Code of Ethics (Part I), and in Lesson 6's activities, Building a Code of Ethics (Part II) and Operationalizing the Code, are typically used and are particularly effective.

After discussing the poem or story, review the key terms on the overhead, some of which are also defined in the worksheet assigned for homework. Next identify other types of values, and discuss the difference between those values and ethical values. Have participants review the values they listed on the Defining Values worksheet. Which of those values seem to be ethical values? Which do not?

Ask, "Why do we need ethical values?" Refer to the article by Gardner in addressing this question. Present the concept of a code of ethics using overheads and review and discuss

the Sample Codes of Ethics handout. Engage the class in a discussion of the difference between "law" and "ethics."

Introduce the process to develop and define a set of shared ethical values by carefully following the instructions for the Building a Code of Ethics (Part I) activity. Begin by stating, "Imagine our college/university needs a new code of ethics—a handful of principles to live by—that can be mounted over the entrance to the campus so everyone knows what we represent. It needs to be a code on which the entire community can agree. Our task is to define that code."

Key Questions

- What are ethical values? How are they different from other kinds of values?
- Why do we need ethical values?
- How is ethics different from the law?
- What are the essential characteristics of a code of ethics? What is the function of a code of ethics?
- What ethical values might we share in common?

Closure & Transition

In the next class, we will continue the process of building our own code of ethics and then determine what behaviors are congruent with that code.

Homework assignment for Lesson 6

Prepare for moral dialogue to advocate putting certain values on the final class list.

Lesson Assessment: Revisions for Next Time

SHARED VALUES

This essay is based on a lecture written by John W. Gardner in August 1992.

. . . I shall limit myself to the United States, but I am wholly convinced there are values that are widely shared around the world.

By "values" we generally mean ideas as to what is laudable or desirable or worthy of our approval. Social values—those to which the culture gives its stamp of approval—are not unchanging realities. Some of the great builders of the value framework, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke for values that were not widely accepted when they lived but are now. There must always be room for dissent—with consequent enrichment and refining of the value framework.

We had better face at once a number of familiar difficulties in talking about values. First, there are a good many sincerely religious people who simply do not believe that a set of values not stemming explicitly from their particular religion (and so labeled) is worthy of serious attention. They can afford to indulge themselves in that belief if they live in a society with an established religion and a populace overwhelmingly committed to that religion. But if they live in a pluralistic society of many religions and philosophies, they must join with others in seeking values that all can subscribe to.

Fortunately, most do just that. Today, in this country, all of the world religions are reasonably at home with the idea that they must find *some* workable common ground of values on which the society can function from day to day.

Disagreement among people adhering to diverse value systems is only part of the problem. Some contemporary thinkers are skeptical of *all* values. Skepticism with respect to any particular version of "ultimate truth" is a very old story. But down the ages, most thinkers believed that, having brushed aside all versions of "the truth" that they regarded as false, they could find, *or might someday find,* the Truth. In the great struggle between religion and science, religion thought it possessed the truth; scientists thought they had means of finding it. Revolutionary thinkers such as Marx and Freud assaulted established beliefs of the time, but each intended to substitute his own version of the truth.

A good many thinkers today take a more radical stand. They say there is no objective truth; there are no absolutes, no eternal verities. There is only what humans invent and put out there. All beliefs, they assert, grow out of a particular time and place and are no more than cultural exhibits. The view has been defended with some cogency. But it is a

view that is hard to live by. Indeed, even people who hold it conduct their lives as though they do believe in something. A scholar of my acquaintance who stoutly asserts that there is no basis for moral values was overcome with moral outrage when a colleague stole one of his ideas and published it without giving him credit.

A thoroughgoing skepticism encourages passivity or neutrality concerning values. But in real life neutrality is often not an option. The accomplishment of group purpose generally requires shared values firmly held. Survival may hang on whether the group does in fact have a deep allegiance to the values in question. Scholars are fascinated with *divergence* in value systems; the men and women who must keep a society functioning are always seeking the *common ground* that will make concerted action possible. They have no choice.

So how can we proceed? Not only is there an answer, but it is an answer that has been around for a long time. If the diverse groups that make up a pluralistic society can agree on values that in their judgment should prevail in the larger society, then they pledge to abide by those values.

The Constitution of the United States, in addition to laying out a design for governing, expresses many values. The values are not given their legitimacy by one or another religion (though individual citizens will find that many of the values are deeply compatible with their own religious beliefs and derive a good deal of their emotional power from those deeper sources). Nor are the values given their legitimacy by scientific proof, nor by tradition (though many have a rich history). They are *pledged values* or covenanted values whose legitimacy stems from the fact that diverse groups are explicitly committed to them. If the idea of pledged values seems somewhat insubstantial, reflect on the extraordinary durability of our Constitution.

This is not a resurrection of social contract theory, which implies that communities arise when a group of individuals arrive at a rational agreement as to the ordering of their life together. Most communities in history have arisen out of kinship bonds; a common language, religion, and culture; and geographical propinquity. I am pursuing a different point, viz., that for a community in which pluralism threatens fragmentation, pledged values may be the only answer.

Pledged values do not always need to be written down. Over the years, a group may evolve a pattern of unwritten norms that are in effect covenanted values.

If people have a shared vision of the future, it motivates them for the arduous tasks of making the vision real. If it is a powerful vision it lifts people out of the petty preoccupations and special interests that separate them and unites them in a common effort.

It is not a matter of fabricating a new vision out of whole cloth. A vision relevant for today will build on values deeply embedded in human history and in our being. It is not as though we come to the task unready. Men and women from the beginning of history have groped and struggled for various pieces of the answer. The materials out of

which we build the vision will be the moral strivings of the race, today and in the distant past.

Most of the ingredients of a vision for this country have been with us for a long time, beginning with our founding documents. The Constitution isn't a vague and elusive vision. It was formulated with care, amended sparingly over two centuries, and enjoys overwhelming support today.

One can precipitate a lively debate by suggesting the values toward which we aspire in our own culture. I am not so reckless as to attempt a definitive list, but I shall suggest the kind of items that might be on such a list.

Justice

Some conception of justice or fair play has cropped up in most cultures since the dawn of history. Most Americans would rank it close to the top of any list of shared values. We all recognize that conceptions of justice vary considerably from one culture to the next, but, from ancient times, no culture has ignored it in principle—though many have abused it in practice. Recent gains have not been so much in new conceptions of justice as in extension of long-established principles of justice to previously excluded groups.

Freedom

Equally high in any list produced by Americans would be freedom. Again, what it means varies from one culture to the next, but the possibility of a shared world conception of freedom has developed fairly steadily over the past 50 years. The U.S. Bill of Rights touches on specific freedoms, such as freedom of speech and of assembly.

Equality

Just as high on any list compiled by Americans would be some formulation of the idea of equality—equality of opportunity, equality before the law, equality of respect, equal access to public services. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that in the matter of rights and freedoms there shall be no "distinction of any kind such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status." Such values are not realized overnight. After our Declaration of Independence, it took us 89 years to free the slaves and another 55 years to give women the vote.

Worth and Dignity of the Individual

We recognize that where there is any vitality of common purpose, the group (state, community, organization) will press its claims, but we expect that it will not undermine our commitment to the inviolability of the individual—the dignity and worth of each person.

Sanctity of Private Religious Beliefs

Within the law, one's personal religious beliefs are inviolable: freedom of religion, thought, and conscience. In practical terms, that requires that there be no establishment of religion, no religious

tests for office, and so on. Both the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights touch on the point.

Release of Human Possibilities

We believe that within the society's framework of values, individuals should be enabled and encouraged to develop the talent that is in them. It is not mentioned (though it is implied) in the founding documents, but it is very close to the core of our national aspirations.

Individual Moral Responsibility

Constraints there must be, not only the external constraints of law, but the internal constraints of self-discipline. Self-discipline is the free person's yoke. Add the constraints of responsibility—responsibility for one's own behavior and growth, for loved ones, for one's community.

Security of Person

This includes safety of life and limb, and freedom from arbitrary arrest or interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence. The preamble to the Constitution specifies "domestic tranquility." The universal declaration speaks of "security of person."

The Management of Conflict

Conflict is a healthy part of everyday living—from athletic and economic competition to suits for the redress of grievances and protests against manifest injustice. But conflict can also destroy—as we have seen in wars, in the Holocaust, in persecution, in terrorism. Every person of moral awareness must work against the attitudes and emotions that make such things possible, and must encourage use of well-established methods of conflict resolution to prevent the worst outcomes.

I shall not attempt to extend the list, but invite the reader to do so. There are many more possibilities: peace, family and community, altruism, a regard for environmental integrity, personal honor, inner peace, a life devoted to principle, and so on.

Suffice it to say that humans continue to dream of a society in which some such values prevail. You can see traces in historical and philosophical writings of the ancient world, in the great religions, in the evolving political thought of the past three centuries. You can see it in the work of Gandhi, in the early documents of this nation, the writings of Jefferson and Thoreau and Lincoln, in Supreme Court decisions, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., in social legislation, in the devoted efforts of individual Americans now and in the past.

There is a curious stubbornness in the survival of the moral ideas. Even in iniquitous times and places they lurk in the minds of people. Injustice is all about us. Perhaps our most distinctively human characteristic is that we will not accept that reality.

JOHN W. GARDNER *served as secretary of health, education, and welfare from July 1965 to March 1968. In 1970, he founded Common Cause, resigning chairmanship in 1977. From 1978 to 1979, he chaired the organizing committee that led (in March 1980) to the founding of Independent Sector, a national forum for organizations in the voluntary sector. He served as chairman of Independent Sector until October 1983. In 1989 he assumed a post at Stanford University, where he now serves as consulting professor.*

At the time of his appointment to the cabinet by President Lyndon Johnson, Gardner was president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

While engaged in full-time employment at Carnegie Corporation, Gardner served continuously from 1947 to 1965 as a consultant to various government agencies: AID, State Department, the U.S. Air Force, the White House, the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, and others. More recently he has served as a consultant to the United Way and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

He served on President John F. Kennedy's Task Force on Education and was chairman of President Kennedy's Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs. He was chairman of President Johnson's Task Force on Education, and of the White House Conference on Education (1965). He was also a member of President Jimmy Carter's Commission on an Agenda for the Eighties, and chairman (1976–1980) of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships. During 1981–82 he served as a member of President Ronald Reagan's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives.

John Gardner was the editor of President Kennedy's book To Turn the Tide, *and is the author of the books* Excellence, Self-Renewal, No Easy Victories, The Recovery of Confidence, In Common Cause, *and* Morale. *His book* On Leadership *was published in 1990. In 1991 Independent Sector published his brief treatise entitled* Building Community.

John Gardner served on the advisory board of the Institute for Global Ethics from 1990 until his death in February 2002.

DEFINING VALUES

What are ethical values anyway?

- The word *ethical* refers to behavior that conforms with the principles of right conduct.
- The word *value,* though, has at least two very different meanings:
  1. It can refer to the relative worth or importance of just about anything (such as monetary worth, artistic worth, or cultural worth).
  2. It can be used, more specifically, to define those principles or standards that are worthy in and of themselves, without regard to any other purpose.

Values that are not ethical in nature (see definition No. 1 above) include musical values (do you like rap or rock?), artistic values (do you prefer oil paintings or cartoons?), and food values (do you like hamburgers or steak?), among others. In and of themselves, these preferences for one value over another have nothing to do with distinguishing right from wrong.

Ethical values, on the other hand, belong under definition No. 2 of the word *value.* They are values, such as truth or honesty, that have intrinsic worth; that is, they are essential and important in and of themselves and not for some other, larger purpose.

Ethical values are about forming the ideal human character. An ideal person would be a perfect person, but we all know that nobody's perfect. So when we talk about trying to be ethical, we are talking about striving toward an ideal, but not about being perfect.

Why do we need ethical values? Because, for one thing, we are social beings. The reality is we need to get along. Stanford University professor John Gardner puts it this way: "The accomplishment of any group's purpose generally requires shared values firmly held. Survival may hang on whether the group does in fact have a deep allegiance to the values in question. [While] scholars are fascinated with divergence in value systems, the men and women who must keep a society functioning are always seeking the common ground that will make concerted action possible. They have no choice."

What are ethical values that society requires we identify and pledge to uphold?

What would you put on your list? Imagine, for example, that you are on a student committee charged with the task of coming up with a code of ethical values for your college or university. What would be on it?

Brainstorm some of your ideas here:

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Defining Key Terms

Purpose

To acquaint students with the nature of different types of values and with the role of language in any discussion of values

Preparation & Materials

Prior to class, select either the poem, "Traveling Through the Dark," or the story, "Shay's Home Run," to introduce the lesson. Carefully review the Defining Shared Values worksheet and the Sample Codes of Ethics handout included in this lesson. Prepare overheads of the poem and key terms, if desired. Have available a number of dictionaries for students to refer to during the discussion. Copy the poem or story, the worksheet, and the Sample Codes of Ethics for distribution and discussion during class.

Process

1. Read and discuss the poem, "Traveling Through the Dark," or the story, "Shay's Home Run." Consider each of the questions included for each piece.

2. Ask: What are moral, or ethical, values?

   Discuss the terms defined on the Defining Shared Values worksheet. (Note: While the glossary makes a distinction between the meaning of *ethics* and *morals*, many philosophers we have talked with admit to using the terms interchangeably. The point? Don't get too involved in the details of the distinctions between ethics and morals. The main point is to see that what we're talking about here are values that relate to understanding the nature of right and wrong. On the other hand, the word *value* has more than one meaning: Some values have little or nothing to do with ethics. You may want to use the overheads in this section to help summarize your discussions.)

3. What other kinds of values are there? How are moral values different?

   Examples are almost unlimited, and the class will easily uncover many of them.

   Consider:

   - Economic values—"get the best bargain you can" versus "always buy the best even if it costs more"
   - Musical values—rock 'n' roll, country, classical music, etc.

Moral values are different because they are about creating virtue, the ideal human character, the highest sense of good. They tend to be intrinsic (essential, inherent in and of themselves) rather than instrumental (serving as a means to an end, essential or not).

4. What are codes of ethics? How are they constructed?

Go over the sample codes included with the lesson. Typically, they are:

- Statements of shared, basic values
- Brief and easily memorized
- General, not detailed
- Stated positively or negatively—e.g., "you should" or "you must not"

Discuss the nature of codes of ethics, using the examples included with this unit and others of your own choosing. Now you are ready to begin the process of building a code of ethics.

Traveling Through the Dark

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

William Stafford

- Why did he stop?
- Once he decided to stop, what dilemma did he face?
- Can you think of people who might not even consider stopping in such a situation? What do you think makes him different from them?
- What do you think his values are?
- Where did his values come from?
- Did he do the right thing?

Shay's Home Run

One afternoon, Shay and his father walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay, a learning-disabled child who attended a special school, asked, "Do you think they will let me play?"

Shay's father knew that his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shay's father understood that if his son was chosen to play it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging.

Shay's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We are losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning."

Shay's father was ecstatic as Shay smiled broadly. Shay was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again and now with two outs and the bases loaded with the potential winning run on base, Shay was scheduled to be up. Would the team actually let Shay bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat.

Everyone knew that it was all but impossible because Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. However as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay should at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. One of Shay's teammates came up to Shay and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch.

The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay and his teammate swung at the ball and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher.

The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could easily have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have ended the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far beyond reach of the first baseman.

Everyone started yelling, "Shay, run to first. Run to first." Never in his life had Shay run to first. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball.

He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman who would tag out Shay, who was still running. But the right fielder understood what the pitcher's intentions were, so he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman's head.

Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second." Shay ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home.

As Shay reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third." As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shay, run home!"

Shay ran home, stepped on home plate and all eighteen boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

Questions to Consider

- Why did the other boys let Shay play?
- Once they decided to let him play, what dilemma did they face?
- Can you think of people who might not let Shay play or, if they were winning, would change their minds at the last minute? What makes these boys different?
- What do you think their values are?
- Where did those values come from?
- Did they do the right thing?

"Shay's Home Run" was produced from the book Echoes of the Maggid *with permission from the author, Rabbi Paysach Krohn, and Artscroll.com/Mesorah Publications, Ltd.*

TRAVELING THROUGH THE DARK

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

—William Stafford

KEY TERMS

ETHICS: The study of standards of right and wrong behavior

VALUE: That which has intrinsic worth or a principle, standard, or quality that is worthwhile

ETHICAL VALUES: Intrinsic values having to do with right and wrong

CODES OF ETHICS ARE:

- General, not detailed
- Brief and easily memorized
- Statements of shared, basic values

Sample Codes of Ethics

The Girl Scout Law

The Revised Girl Scout Law

West Point Honor Code

The Four-Way Test of Rotary International

Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

The Caux Round Table Principles for Business

The Greens/Green Party USA: Ten Key Values

Izaak Walton League Hunter's Pledge

Islamic Code of Sports Ethics

Gandhi's List of Evils to Remember

The Ten Commandments

You'll find a copy of each of the above codes of ethics on the pages that follow.

The Girl Scout Law

A SCOUT IS:
Trustworthy
Loyal
Useful
Friendly
Courteous
Kind to animals
Obedient
Cheerful
Thrifty
Clean in thought, word, and deed

The Revised Girl Scout Law

I WILL DO MY BEST:
To be honest
To be fair
To help where I am needed
To be cheerful
To be friendly and considerate
To be a sister to every Girl Scout
To respect authority
To use resources wisely
To protect and improve the world around me
To show respect for myself and others through my words and actions

Girl Scouts of the USA
New York, New York

West Point Honor Code

A cadet does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.

United States Military Academy
West Point, New York

The Four-Way Test

Of the things we think, say, or do:

1. Is it truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Rotary International
Evanston, Illinois

Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people.

Thou shalt not interfere with other people's computer work.

Thou shalt not snoop around in other people's computer files.

Thou shalt not use a computer to steal.

Thou shalt not use a computer to bear false witness.

Thou shalt not copy or use proprietary software for which you have not paid.

Thou shalt not use other people's computer resources without authorization or proper compensation.

Thou shalt not appropriate other people's intellectual output.

Thou shalt think about the social consequences of the program you are writing or the system you are designing.

Thou shalt always use a computer in ways that ensure consideration and respect for your fellow humans.

Computer Ethics Institute
Washington, D.C.

The Caux Round Table Principles for Business

1. The responsibilities of business: beyond shareholders to stakeholders
2. The economic and social impact of business: toward innovation, justice, and world community
3. Business behavior: beyond the letter of the law toward a spirit of trust
4. Respect for rules
5. Support for multilateral trade
6. Respect for the environment
7. Avoidance of illicit operations

Caux Round Table, 1994
Caux, Switzerland

The Greens/Green Party USA: Ten Key Values

Ecological wisdom
Social justice
Grassroots democracy
Nonviolence
Decentralization
Community economics
Feminism
Respect for diversity
Personal and global responsibility
Future focus

The Greens/Green Party USA

Izaak Walton League Hunter's Pledge

Respect the environment and wildlife

Respect property and landowners

Show consideration for nonhunters

Hunt safely

Know and obey the law

Support wildlife and habitat conservation

Pass on an ethical hunting tradition

Strive to improve outdoor skills and understanding of wildlife

Hunt only with ethical hunters

Izaak Walton League of America
Gathersburg, Maryland

Islamic Code of Sports Ethics

(as Inspired and Practiced by Hakeem Olajuwon)

I swear by God the Almighty that I will:

Regard God in carrying out my sport

Promote sportsmanship at all stages

Keep my fans' trust and confidence

Always be an instrument of God's mercy, extending sportsmanship to friend and enemy

Strive in the pursuit of knowledge

Respect my coach, teach my juniors, and be a brother to members of the sports industry

Live my faith in private and public, avoiding whatever may blemish me in the eyes of God, His Apostle, and my fellow faithful

The Islamic Society of Greater Houston
Houston, Texas

Gandhi's List of Evils to Remember

Wealth without work

Commerce without morality

Science without humanity

Pleasure without conscience

Politics without principles

Knowledge without character

Mahatma Gandhi,
leader of the Indian Nationalist movement

The Ten Commandments

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, or serve them.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet.

From The Bible
Exodus 20:1–17
Washington, D.C.

LAW VERSUS ETHICS

LAW—A consistent set of universal rules that are widely published, generally accepted, and usually enforced. Laws describe the ways in which people are required to act within society. Laws are usually enforced by the judicial system and courts of law.

ETHICS—Ideal standards that define what is good for the individual and society and the duties that people owe themselves and others. Ethics are typically enforced by individual conscience, professional associates, and friends and family.

ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS TYPICALLY EXCEED LEGAL DUTIES— The law does not prohibit many acts that would be widely condemned as unethical. The law also prohibits acts that some would perceive as ethical.

—*S. M. Anstead (July 6, 1999). "Law versus Ethics in Management." Available online at* http://members.tripod.com/~ansteadsue/ethics.htm

Building a Code of Ethics (Part I)

Purpose

- To provide practical experience in negotiating a set of values that reflects a group's common ethical ground
- To demonstrate that there are values on which all members of the group can agree

Preparation & Materials

It will be helpful to have two flip charts and heavy-duty markers for the values brainstorming session. With masking tape, post completed flip-chart sheets on the wall in full view of all students. Have available a number of dictionaries for students to refer to during their discussions.

Process

1. Values Brainstorming Session

a. Set the stage for the exercise

"Imagine our college/university needs a code of ethics—a handful of principles to live by—that can be mounted over the campus entrance so that everyone knows what we stand for. It needs to be a code that everyone can agree to. Our task is to define that code."

b. Blue-sky session

In an open brainstorming session, ask students to toss out as many possible values as they can. Students who are new to an understanding of ethical values may need prompts to stimulate their line of thinking. Useful approaches may be:

- "Imagine you are having a heart-to-heart talk with your son or daughter about what makes a person good. Write down as many words or phrases as you can that describe a good person—what they value, how they act, how they treat other people."
- "Think of someone you admire. What qualities do you admire in that person?"
- "Name some important heroes in history. What values did they have?" You may need to make suggestions to get ideas rolling (Nathan Hale, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., etc.).

Refer them also to the list of values they made when they filled out the Defining Shared Values worksheet. Agree to use positive noun or noun-phrase statements—"honest" instead of "not dishonest," for example. List every word or short phrase on the blackboard or flip charts. Try to get several dozen words on the list before proceeding to the next step. (You might find that words come in fits and starts, but we've never seen a group that couldn't find at least 60 words, and many groups come up with 80 to 100.) Apply the general rules of any brainstorming session: Move things along at a quick pace, and allow no discussion or judgments.

2. Narrow Down the List

This step of narrowing down the list works best when it is performed in a series of smaller steps. We've found that this way often works the best:

a. Suggest some parameters

- A word such as *ethics* does not belong on the list because it is an overarching term—what the exercise is really all about.
- Some words are nearly synonymous, and, since the number of words to be included in the final list is limited, it is a good idea to narrow synonyms down to one word and to also make sure that no word on the list is in fact a subset of another word. If some students, for example, choose *honesty* and others *truth* and others *integrity*, can they come to agreement on the one word that most accurately represents what they mean to convey? Which word will be best, given the group's overall purpose?
- Tell them to make sure that each word selected is indeed a moral value. For example, during the blue-sky session, someone might suggest *creativity* or *humor.* But if either of these is included in the final list, the group is saying that if a person lacks creativity or humor, then he or she is an immoral person.

b. Individual process

Ask each student to pick his or her top eight values from the list. Allow five to ten minutes for this step.

c. Small-group process (If desired, use the Small Group Instructions overhead.)

Next, have students form groups of five to six and select a recorder for each group. The task is to take their individual lists and combine them into one list of eight values. In this setting, students will question each other and work to negotiate a list that has no more than eight values on it, and includes only those values on which *all* members of the group can agree.

Tell students that during the next class, the group as a whole will try to pull together all of the small group lists into one list for the class.

Building a Code

Step One

On your own, from the list developed during the brainstorming process, pick the five ethical values that you, personally, believe are the most important.

Write your own list here.

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____

Step Two

Divide into small groups. In the small group, share your list with the others and, as a group, try to narrow the choices down to one list of no more than five values or qualities that everyone can agree to.

Write your small-group's list here.

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____

Step Three

Get back together as a large group. Post each group's list on the wall, and see if you can combine all of the lists into one.

Write the final list here.

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

1. Select a group recorder.

2. The recorder will:

   - Ask someone to name a value on their list.
   - Then ask how many others have that same value on their list.
   - Record the number of times the value was selected.
   - Repeat the process, asking each group member in turn, until all values have been listed.

3. Develop a final list containing no more than eight values. Keep in mind that:

   - Some values can be combined into one
   - Some values may be subsets of others
   - Some values may not be ethical values