

LESSON NINE

PRACTICING ETHICAL DECISION MAKING: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

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PRACTICING ETHICAL DECISION MAKING : ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to identify three ethical decision-making principles and apply them to environmental ethical dilemmas.

ACTIVITIES

- Environmental Steward Interviews
- Jigsaw Decision Making
- Moral Courage

CLOSURE AND TRANSITION

Now that we have been introduced to the tools for resolving ethical dilemmas, we can put them into practice. In the next lesson, we'll see ethical decision making in action, and you'll have a chance to put your values and your ability to make ethical decisions to the test.

HOMEWORK

- Environmental Stewards News Article
- Journal Entry: Evidence of Human Impact?

OPENING DISCUSSION

Follow-up from Lesson Eight homework:

Go around the class and ask each student to refer to their journal entry from the homework and share their ethical dilemma. List these dilemmas on the board and then ask students which paradigms these dilemmas fit. Ask them how their list of values comes into play.

Introduction to Lesson Nine:

What does it mean to be a steward? (Ask a student to refer to a dictionary for a definition.) What would it mean to be an environmental steward? Does it relate to ethics in any way? If so, how? If you are a steward, you care for something, and ethical dilemmas often arise when we care about something. The dilemmas you

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD INTERVIEWS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity is to remind students of the values they have in common and to help them identify how these values are practiced in environmental stewardship.

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

You will need:

- A copy of the “Environmental Stewardship Interview Sheet” for each student
- Space outside for students to spread out

Before class:

- Break the class into two groups. One group will be the reporters, and the other group will be the environmental stewards.
- Then pair up each reporter with a steward. (Try to pair up students who do not already share a research site.)
- After the stewards have been interviewed, they will switch and become the reporters. At this point, they will have to choose a different person to interview than the one who interviewed them.
- Tell students that the reporters will be interviewing the stewards about what it means to be an environmental steward based on our class list of shared values. (You may want to remind students of the list if it has not been used for a while.)
- Then tell students that they are going to have to write an article about this person for homework, so they should take good, detailed notes during the interview.

TIP: Remind students that environmental stewards are those people who care for the environment in some way. Often stewards may protect and care for a particular resource for a specific purpose (e.g., hunters protect the land so they will have game to hunt). Be sure your students get a well-rounded understanding of what stewardship means, even though they may not personally agree with some of the actions that stewards may take (e.g., hunters kill animals on the land they have protected).

PROCEDURE

1. Give each reporter an “Environmental Stewardship Interview Sheet” and a pencil.
2. Ask students to find a place outside where they won’t be distracted by other students.
3. Explain to them that they should answer the questions honestly, and think about ways that they really are environmental stewards.
4. Give students enough time to complete the sheets and then ask them to switch roles and find new partners. Explain that their job is to gather the important details that indicate this person’s stewardship.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS NEWS ARTICLE

Ask students to write an article about the environmental steward they interviewed. Remind them to include as much important detail about the person as they can and find a title that will cause people to read their article.



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP INTERVIEW SHEET

Reporter's Name: _____

Environmental Steward's Name: _____

Reporter: Can you tell me what it means for you to be an environmental steward in this community?

Reporter: Please define your core values, and explain how you demonstrate or practice those values as a steward of the environment.

VALUE	MEANS THAT . . .
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Reporter: Have you ever had an ethical dilemma that relates to your life as an environmental steward?

Reporter: Is there anything you would like to do better as an environmental steward?

JIGSAW DECISION MAKING

PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity is to intensify students' understanding of each of the three decision principles as they apply to specific dilemmas.

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

Prepare your methodology for assigning students to three groups. Select a dilemma from the Dilemma Examples section in which you believe there will be a real difference of opinion among students.

TIPS:

- Remember to emphasize that each of these decision approaches represents a valid and respected principle among philosophers around the world and over the course of history. Two different students might make two different decisions in a particular situation, but if the decision involves a right-versus-right conflict of core values and is based on at least one of these sound philosophical principles, then each decision will be an ethical one. Also, while students might tend to prefer one principle of decision making over another, the value of this exercise is that it encourages each decision maker to see other approaches as equally valid.
- Cautions: In applying the three decision principles, it is important not to become distracted by a natural tendency to believe that if two principles suggest one decision and one principle suggests another decision, then the vote is two to one and the highest right has been determined by the majority rule. This is not the case! Each of the decision principles is equally valued, and your intuition may favor one principle over the other two.
- The idea that there is more than one right answer in these types of dilemmas is not the same as ethical relativism. Strictly speaking, ethical relativists assert that there are no broad applicable norms. Morality makes sense, ethical relativists say, only in the context of a particular culture in a particular place at a particular point in time. In this unit on ethical decision making, we assert that there are core values shared across cultures that take priority over other values, and that there are a number of time-tested philosophical principles available for use in resolving right-versus-right ethical dilemmas, regardless of the cultural context or point in history.
- In many right-versus-right ethical problems, it may seem there are only two options and that they are mutually exclusive. But often, after deeply thinking about a

dilemma, a third way—a kind of middle ground between the extremes—appears. This the “trilemma” option, discussed in the last lesson. Not all dilemmas are open to this type of solution, but it is important—especially when neither mutually exclusive option seems quite right—to learn to ask, “Is there a third way out?” Sometimes, in fact, the third way out is the best solution.

PROCEDURE

1. Review the philosophical ideas behind each of the three decision principles. After students exhibit a solid grasp of the three principles, divide them into three groups. Assign each group one of the three principles to apply to the selected dilemma examples. Tell students that their assignment in these small groups is to come up with the decision that their specific principle would most likely arrive at, and to explain why they came to that decision. Allow about fifteen minutes for this part of the activity.
2. Optional role playing: If there is time, you might want to ask each of the three groups to role-play the decision they think their principle would suggest for the class as a whole.
3. Then make small groups to include one or two members from each of the principle groups (ends-based, rule-based, and care-based). Tell students that their first assignment is to share with other group members the decision that their principle-based group arrived at and why that decision was chosen. Next, after each perspective has been shared, ask them to come up with a decision, taking into consideration all three principles as well as the concept of the third way out. What would they do and why?
4. Debrief the exercise. Ask questions such as:
 - What decision did you come to?
 - Was there a third way out?
 - How did you feel when you had to represent only one decision principle?
 - Did you ever feel you were manipulating a decision principle to come to a previously arrived-at decision?

MORAL COURAGE

PURPOSE

By the end of this lesson, students will have a greater appreciation for the courage it often takes to make and act on tough ethical decisions. They will understand that moral courage often involves some personal sacrifice.

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

Your will need:

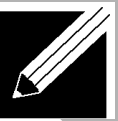
- A copy of the “Moral Courage Worksheet” for every two to three students

BACKGROUND

Moral courage is different from other kinds of courage. How might we define moral courage? What other kinds of courage are there?

PROCEDURE

1. Pass out one “Moral Courage Worksheet” to each small group of two to three students.
2. Ask the small groups to read the opening aloud in their groups and then complete the questions.
3. When all groups are finished, reconvene as a whole class and discuss the students’ findings and lead a discussion using the following questions:
 - How is moral courage different from other kinds of courage? Why is it sometimes more difficult to have than other kinds of courage?
 - Who do you think most students would identify as heroes? Give some examples. Why do you think this is? What makes someone a hero? Is moral courage necessarily involved? Should it be?
 - In the dilemmas you have already explored, how has moral courage played a part?
 - Think back to the challenges you have faced or predicted. How does moral courage feature in your solutions to those problems?
 - Is it possible to “practice” being morally courageous?



MORAL COURAGE WORKSHEET

Names: _____

There are many types of courage, just as there are many types of values:

- There's the courage shown by an athlete when she tries a gutsy play during an important game.
- There's the courage of a hot-air balloonist trying to be the first to fly around the world.
- There's the courage of a soldier who risks his life to save a buddy.
- There's the courage of an AIDS patient who decides to speak out publicly about the disease.

Not all courage is about moral courage, however. In the first two examples above, the courage shown is more about a decision to take a physical risk to achieve something that has little to do with ethics or morality. But in the last two examples, both the soldier and the AIDS patient chose to uphold their core ethical values even in the face of great personal risk. In fact, we would call the soldier a hero for risking his life for someone else. We would call the AIDS patient brave because she put the long-term interests of others ahead of herself.

DEFINITION: Moral courage is about choosing to stick to one's values in the face of opposition and the risk of great personal sacrifice.

Consider these real-life examples:

RACHEL CARSON

In 1962, through her book, *Silent Spring*, and through testimony to congress, Rachel Carson exposed the damaging effects of chemicals being used and promoted by agricultural scientists and the government, and called for a change in the way humans treat the natural world. She was attacked by the chemical industry and some in government as an alarmist, but courageously continued to speak out in hopes that her fight would result in change.

Why is Rachel Carson's action an example of moral courage?

Is this the kind of person you would admire? Why or why not?

RODOLFO MONTIEL FLORES

The founder of Campesinos Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petatlán, Rodolfo Montiel Flores and his fellow farmer ecologists staged a successful campaign against one of the world's largest transnational timber corporations when the firm refused to respect the livelihoods of the local inhabitants. To challenge the extraction of wealth from the fragile mountain region, Montiel Flores organized roadblocks and protests that eventually forced the corporation to withdraw from the local forest. Brutal repression followed and today Flores sits in solitary confinement in a jail cell on trumped-up charges.

Why is Rodolfo Montiel Flores's action an example of moral courage?

Is this the kind of person you would admire? Why or why not?



KEN SARO-WIWA

For many years, writer Ken Saro-Wiwa led the protests of the Ogoni people in Nigeria, Africa, against the exploitation of their lands by Western petroleum companies. He helped to draft the Ogoni Bill of Rights in 1990, which expressed Ogoni determination to secure their political, economic, and environmental rights. He demanded that the oil companies bypass the central government, engage immediately in environmental impact assessments of their past activities, and raise their standards to best practice. The companies eventually pulled out of Ogoniland but on November 10, 1996, after being put on trial, Saro-Wiwa was hanged by the Nigerian military.

Why are Ken Saro-Wiwa's actions an example of moral courage?

Is this the kind of person you would admire? Why or why not?

Sometimes it takes moral courage to make, and act on, a tough ethical decision. Being morally courageous is part of being ethically fit—you have to practice doing the right thing if you are to become good at it.

JOURNAL ENTRY : EVIDENCE OF HUMAN IMPACT

Ask students to copy the following questions into their journals and then go to their research sites and answer the questions:

1. Is there any evidence in your research site of human impact?
2. Is it positive or negative impact?
3. What would have to be done in order for there to be no human impact in your site?
4. Do any of your classmates' sites affect your site? How?
5. Do you think your research plot has any environmental problems that need to be considered?

