

THE ETHICAL BAROMETER EXERCISE

PURPOSE

- To develop an awareness of the ethical aspects of day-to-day events
- To begin to ask if ethics is any more important today than it was in earlier times

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

Have available at least one flip chart, several markers, and masking tape. Prepare copies of The Ethical Barometer handout and the Ethical Barometer Worksheet and distribute to students. Divide the class into groups of five or six students.

PROCESS

- Open the lesson by referring to some simple statistics on how people view the current state of our society's ethics (see Selected Survey Statistics handout).
- Then follow up on the homework assignment. Divide students into small groups or pairs and ask them to discuss the ethical content of each news story: What does each story have to do with ethics? Circulate among students and listen to their discussions.
- Introduce the concept of an ethical barometer, using The Ethical Barometer handout. Ask: What might we mean by an "ethical barometer"?
- Divide the class into small groups of five or six students, giving each student a copy of the Ethical Barometer Worksheet for their personal use. Advise students to take notes in preparation for completing the worksheet. Assign each group of students the task of coming up with a list of possible answers for each of the three questions. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for each question on the worksheet. Then, *either*:
 - Have each group list their answers, which will be discussed by the whole class, on flip-chart-sized paper taped on the wall, *or*
 - Solicit ideas from each group and record them on flip charts at the front of the room. Label three flip-chart pages as follows: "Ethical Barometer UP," "Ethical Barometer DOWN," and "What Each of Us Can Do."
- Finally, discuss the overarching question: Is our society's ethical barometer rising or falling? (Are people any different today than in the past? Are we just more

aware of things now than we used to be? Is there anything about today that is significantly different from the past?)

- For homework, in addition to the reading assignment “There’s Only Ethics,” ask students to complete the Ethical Barometer Worksheet. Tell students these papers will be collected, but assure them that their responses will not be judged or graded. These papers will provide a valuable look at your students’ scope in ethical thinking and may suggest ways to shape how you will present the rest of the *Building Decision Skills* curriculum.