

Ethical Decision-Making

A presentation for Junior Achievement
September 24, 2013
Dr. Bryson Payne
Department Head of Computer Science



Ethical Decision-Making

- Identifying ethical dilemmas
- Knowing your values
- Gathering information
- Weighing the options
- Deciding and acting
- Making hard choices
- Dealing with the tension
- Becoming who you want to be



Identifying ethical dilemmas

- Problem
- Opportunity
- Options
- Ethical dilemma – when two options/outcomes both meet, or both violate, one or more values



Knowing your values

Your values...	vs.	What you value
• Integrity		• Money
• Trust		• Time
• Loyalty		• Family
• Honesty		• Love
• Courage		• Health
• Responsibility		• Respect of others



Gathering information

- Information – facts, unknowns, stakeholders
- Options – ask for advice/help, get creative
- Alternatives – evaluate the options, test or try
- Solutions – which option is best (or least bad)
- Pros & Cons
- Short-term & Long-term



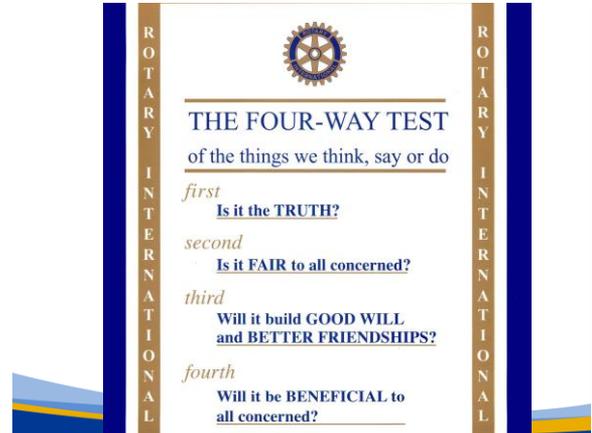
Weighing the options

- Four ethical & philosophical approaches presented by Junior Achievement, plus three “bonus” frameworks:
 - Idealism
 - Cherokee long-life perspective
 - Ask yourself “what story do I want to tell?”



Ethical & philosophical approaches

- Act after weighing the consequences. Choose what does the most good for the most people.
- Act on what you were taught or trained by parents, family, teachers, coaches, friends.
- Act on what is required by your job or the law. Review your responsibilities and commitments.
- Act after referring to your belief in a right way. Review your virtues, faith, or conscience.



Idealism: Begin with the end in mind

- Start with the ideal state, and work your way back
- Stephen R. Covey (7 Habits of Highly Effective People) called this “Beginning with the end in mind”

Cherokee long-life perspective

- Cherokee storytellers speak of a concept their ancestors used in making important decisions:
- The Long-Life Perspective – picture yourself as an old man/woman, and think about what you would tell yourself in this moment or situation
- Are there things you wish you knew 5 years ago? Try to imagine yourself five years from now, giving your present self the same advice.

Ask yourself

“What story do I want to tell?”

- Author and pastor Andy Stanley frames this as a question: What story do I want to tell?
- In 5, 10, 15, 50 years... what kind of story do I want to be able to tell about this time, or about my life
- His advice: Never make a choice that will make you a liar for life – in other words, make decisions you can tell, truthfully, in your story

Deciding and acting

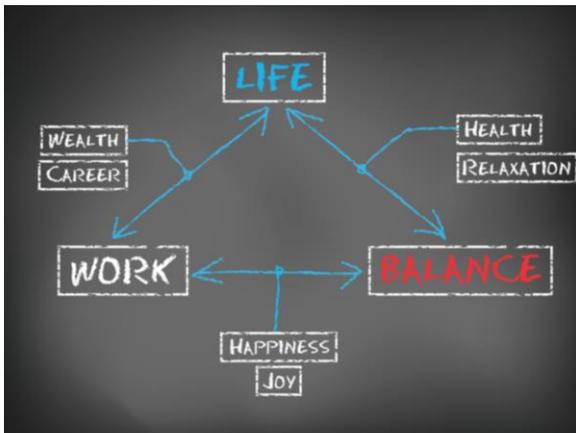
- However you arrive at your choice, you have to decide – you have to act on a decision
- Evaluate who you are, what you value, what you're passionate about, where you want to go, how you want to be known
- Make a decision and be prepared to stand by it – be ready to take responsibility for the outcome, good or bad – or correct it

Making hard choices

- Most of our decisions are “default” decisions – some psychologists estimate 80% or more
- Set yourself up for good “default” decisions
- Willpower usually loses in the long run
- Discipline is the ability to plan ahead/work ahead to avoid willpower failures
 - Don't go to the grocery store hungry, pick a designated driver BEFORE going out, decide what you WON'T do – think ahead, avoid bad situations

Dealing with the tension

- Recognize the tension that comes from two conflicting values – ethical dilemmas:
 - telling the truth or being loyal to a friend when they ask you to cover for them;
 - wanting to keep a job but needing to tell a boss about inappropriate behavior;
 - taking personal responsibility or saving money by not reporting an item you broke...



Becoming who you want to be

- You can't just BE what or who you want to be – you have to **BECOME**
- A life, a reputation is made up of choices
 - Start with the ideal state and work your way back
 - Consider the Cherokee long-life perspective
 - Don't make a choice that will make you a liar for life
- Success is made up of habits – plan ahead, set your boundaries – what WON'T you do?

Ethics for Life

- Ethical dilemmas are a part of your life today
- They will continue to arise in your work life, your family life, etc., for the rest of your life
- The challenge, and perhaps the unfair thing, is that it only takes one unethical decision to ruin a career, a family, or a reputation
- Set yourself up for good “big” decisions by making good “little” decisions every day

Resources for Ethical Decision Making

- UNG BB&T Center for Ethical Business Leadership: <http://ung.edu/bbt-center-ethical-business-leadership>
- SCU Markkula Center for Applied Ethics: <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/framework.html>

Thank you for your time!

- Questions/Answers/Ideas
- Copies of the presentation:
Available online at www.brysonpayne.com
- More information about computer science/IT
careers: <http://ung.edu/cs>

