

The Ethics School

Session 4

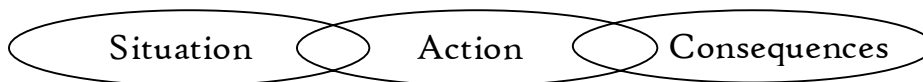
A bRight Idea

I choose my behavior. I make the best choices when I deliberate about important factors.

Guiding Question One:

What are some factors that might prompt a behavioral choice that lacks significant deliberation?

This behavior chain has three links: (Handout 4)



As your teacher reads examples of six different situations, which factors do you think influenced the students' actions?

Emotions

Habits

Lack of Knowledge

Sense of Invisibility

Peer Pressure

Lack of Control

Other?

(Bolin, 1990, 40-44)

Zebulon was sitting next to a friend who wanted to use the Internet at school. Since Adelaide did not have Internet rights, Zebulon provided her with his own user name and password so that she could use the Internet.

(Lack of Knowledge of AUP rules)

Yolanda was treated badly by her boyfriend. Instead of doing her assigned work, she used the school computer to create a vulgar note to him that expressed her angry feelings.

(Emotions)

Xavier was searching the Internet for information about holiday food customs. Some unexpected links showed up. He kept clicking until he found himself viewing pornographic images. Others students looked over his shoulder with curious interest as he continued to display the links.

(Peer Pressure, Habits)

Wynona's teacher was busy in a different part of the classroom. Since she was bored with the class assignment, Wynona used her Hotmail account to read and send email.

(Sense of Invisibility)

Viktor spends a lot of time playing computer games. Even when he is using a school computer, his first response is to play one of the games he has stored in a personal folder.

(Habits)

Ursula's mother requires her daughter to earn straight A's. If she earns a lower grade in any class, Ursula will have to move out of their home. Ursula's mother monitors what happens in every class every day. When Ursula does not understand how to complete a spreadsheet assignment, her mother does it for her. Ursula turns it in as her own.

(Lack of Control, Sense of Invisibility)

Once these actions have been carried out, is that the end of it?

No. Even though you may not have considered possible outcomes, these consequences might follow...

- You might lose valuable privileges and opportunities.
- You might be setting a pattern of behavior that keeps you from growing into a moral, responsible, achieving adult with a high sense of self-worth.
- You might be trapped in a style of decision-making that is accompanied by stress, guilt, and shame.

Guiding Question Two:

What links could I add to the behavior chain to improve the way I make decisions about my behavior?

A better behavior chain would have at least five links.



Guiding Question Three:

What is deliberation?

It means that you think before you make a decision about how to behave.

Deliberation

Write the gist of the following “weaker” deliberations on the lines below the weak link. (Handout 4)

For a person who is still operating at a lower level of moral development, Lawrence Kohlberg, *Preconventional Level* (Markkula, 2003, 2)— they will deliberate about these types of consequences:

- What are the chances that my actions will be discovered?
- Am I going to be embarrassed or ashamed?
- What are the chances that someone in authority will punish me?
- Will my choice directly hurt someone else?
- What if I don’t really see or know the person I hurt?
- Since so many other people make this wrong choice, why shouldn’t I?
- Since other people aren’t ethical toward me, why should I be ethical toward them?

(Willard, 7/20/2003, 10)

(Willard, 2002, 2)

Deliberation

For a person who accepts the responsibility to operate at a higher level of morality—which means they consider the rights and needs of others Lawrence Kohlberg, *Postconventional Level* (Markkula, 2003, 2)— s/he will deliberate about these more meaningful types of concerns:

Using one of more of the six situations mentioned previously, process these types of deliberation: Take notes below the “stronger” deliberation link. (Handout 4)

- What are some different options that I might choose?
- When I remind myself that I am only one person in my class, my school, and my technology community, which of these options

- would support values that are good for the majority (and not just for me at the moment)?
- As I establish my personal identity, which of these options would help me feel good about myself in the long run? Why?
 - When I think about my noble values, which of these options would support them best?
 - When I think about my positive goals, which of these options could hurt my progress? Which of these options would support my progress?

Do you know yourself well enough to be able to answer those questions? If not, that's okay. This measuring stick might help guide you along a good path. By choosing and practicing good behaviors—even without being firmly grounded in your self esteem, morality, values, and goals—you will set yourself on a path of self-discovery through positive experiences. (Bolin, 1990, 15)

Measuring Stick for Decisions:

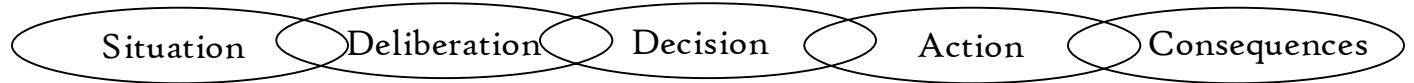
1. Would I be proud to tell my mom and dad? (Friend, teacher, principal, clergy, etc.)
2. If I were in the other person's shoes, would I admit that the action was fair and correct?
3. If I did it at work, would the company's customers be even more anxious to buy our product?
4. Would I be comfortable reading about my behavior on the front page of our hometown newspaper?
5. Looking back ten years from now, would I feel good about my choice?
6. Would I want my future children to take my behavior as an example?
7. Is this a decision that a wise, informed, virtuous person would make?

(Pfaffenberger, 2002, 519)

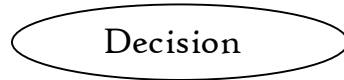
(Willard, 2003, 5)

Rather than reacting to avoid consequences, you are deliberating about behaviors that will help you to grow into a principled, responsible, achieving individual.

Guiding Question 5:
Why do I need a link in the chain called “decision?”



(Bolin, et. al, 1990, 22.)



Because by “not deciding” you are making the decision to let outside influences determine your behaviors.

After you deliberate, you need to make a conscious choice about your behavior. There are no guarantees. Every choice comes as a package with advantages and disadvantages.

“Given all that you know, what is the best choice?”

“Can you live with that choice?”

“Are you prepared to stand up for your choice in spite of criticism?”

Summary

Choosing behaviors that show positive values will help you become a moral and ethical person.

Preview for future session:

When I make good choices, I am preparing myself to preserve the benefits that come from secure employment.

RESOURCES

Bolin, Frances Schoonmaker. *Growing Up Caring*. Peoria: Glencoe, 1990.

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Pfaffenberger, Bryan. *Computers in Your Future*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Willard, Nancy, M.S., J.D. "Choosing Not To Go Down the Not-so-good Cyberstreets." <http://responsiblenetizen.org/documents/wnas.html>. 7/30/2003.

Willard, Nancy E. *Computer Ethics, Etiquette, & Safety For the 21st Century Student*. Eugene: International Society for Technology in Education, 2002.