

Ethical Decision Making

According to Kenneth Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale, authors of *The Power of Ethical Management*, there are three questions you should ask yourself whenever you are faced with an ethical dilemma:

1. **Is it legal?** Will I be violating civil law or company policy? Will I be violating the student code of conduct?
2. **Is it balanced?** Is it fair to all parties concerned both in the short-term as well as the long-term? Does it promote win-win relationships?
3. **How will it make me feel about myself?** Will it make me proud? Would I feel good if my decision was published in the newspaper? Would I feel good if my family knew about it?

When determining if a decision is ethical we often come across “gray areas.” These gray areas present an opportunity to reflect by sequentially answering the three questions above. Answering yes to any, or all of the questions is not a guarantee that an ethical decision will be reached. However, you may feel more confident that you have made a good-faith effort to make an ethical decision.

Apply the above three questions to the following case studies to determine an ethical response in each scenario. After determining the ethical responses, share how you personally would respond in each case.

Case Study 1:

Your parents promise to allow you to obtain your driver’s license, and offer to pay your car insurance, and gas expenses on one condition: that you are available to transport your grandparents to their various appointments around town. Your grandparents are elderly, and have decreased mobility. They therefore possess a handicapped-parking permit. One day, parking on campus is very crowded. You are late to class after dropping off your grandparents, and are going to miss the beginning of an exam. Is it acceptable to use your handicapped-parking permit to park on campus in a better location so that you can arrive at your test on time?

Case Study 2:

You find that your study partner in a math class has obtained a copy of the upcoming final exam from a student-employee in the math department. The student-employee found it left on the printer. You did not score well on midterms and could really benefit from a boost to your grade. What do you do?

Case Study 3:

During the first week of spring quarter, after spending \$200 to purchase a copy of your calculus book, a friend in your class provides you with access to the book in .pdf format. Your finances are tight because you spent your summer savings on fall and winter quarter expenses for school. What do you do?

Case Study 4:

A friend emails you a copy of the instructor’s solution manual for your engineering textbook. Is it ethical to use the solution manual to complete your homework?