

moment

*of* truth

**Participant's Guide**

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*Watch your thoughts, for they become words.*

*Watch your words, for they become actions.*

*Watch your actions, for they become habits.*

*Watch your habits, for they become character.*

*Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.*

**– Anonymous**

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## Introduction

Why ethics training? Most of us know the difference between right and wrong. We know the difference between telling the truth and telling a lie. We can explain why honesty and integrity are important.

We're basically good people. We work hard. We try hard. We learn from our mistakes. Would we describe ourselves as having good character? Well, that depends. We're not born with good character. It's something that is developed over time. And, it's something that constantly evolves based on the decisions—ethical or not—that we make.

### A Universal Code of Conduct

Regardless of culture, people worldwide begin learning, at an early age, the same code of conduct of honesty and fairness. Universally, we all agree that it is wrong to lie, cheat and steal.

It is this code of conduct that sets us apart from other animals. Human beings have the unique ability to recognize the virtuous path from the dishonorable one.

#### Shades of Gray

But it's our ideas about what makes a virtuous path that clouds the issues or creates shades of gray. Everyone has an opinion about the rightness or wrongness of an action—and that opinion is based on personal experiences and desires, as well as our values and beliefs.

We may understand the universal code of conduct, but it is our values and beliefs that help us determine the context of our actions—or rationalize our behavior. That's why ethics can get complicated. When right and wrong stare you in the face and you start thinking about your choice, that's a Moment of Truth. That's when you need to decide who you are and who you want to become.

## Character

Good character is something that is developed over time. And it's something that constantly evolves based on the decisions—ethical or not—that we make. With every Moment of Truth, you are making a choice about your character.

### Our Moments of Truth

When we are faced with a Moment of Truth, sometimes it's difficult to see through all the things that can cloud our judgment:

- who our decision affects
- the importance of our decision
- the short-term consequences
- how our decision impacts us
- what other people will think
- what we'll have to do

We debate our decision. Sometimes we rationalize. Sometimes we feel pressure—emotional pressure.

Emotional pressure begins in childhood and continues throughout our life. Sometimes the emotional pressure comes from other people—pressure from peers, family, colleagues, etc.

*“Come on. What’s the big deal?”*

*“We’re the only ones who will know.”*

*“Everyone else is in.”*

*“It’ll be fun.”*

*“You know you want to...”*

*“Everybody does it.”*

Other times, the emotional pressure comes from self.

*“Nobody will know.”*

*“I deserve it.”*

*“It’s so much easier this way.”*

*“I can’t be bothered. Besides, it was her mistake.”*

*“It’s a huge company. They won’t miss it.”*

*“We could use the money.”*

***During this workshop, you will have the opportunity to explore your own Moments of Truth and the things that may cloud your judgment.***

## Welcome

So why are you here? Because the training is required? Maybe.

Because, in the public fallout over a highly publicized corporate scandal, someone decided ethics training would be useful? Maybe.

Because you and your colleagues don't know right from wrong? Definitely not.

You're here because even though you know the difference between right and wrong and you know what an ethical choice is, it's not always easy to see what your *actual* choice is.

Things get in the way. Things cloud our judgment. And sometimes we can't see the actual choice we're making.

That's why you're here. Not to learn how to be ethical. You already know that. Not to learn how to make the right choice or even what the right choice is. You know that too. You're here so you can learn how to **see** the right choice. To learn how to get rid of all the distractions that can interfere with determining the rightness or wrongness of a decision. To learn how to see the actual choice you're making.

The choice is always yours. But why not make it with a clear head?

### Universal Code of Conduct

Across all cultures, worldwide, we live with a shared understanding of right and wrong.

Psychological researchers have labeled this common understanding that crosses all cultures a universal code of conduct.

*What are the elements of this universal code of conduct?*

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## Activity: What Do You Think?

### The High Road

*Why is it sometimes tough to take the high road?*

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### Our Inner Voice

*What is the purpose of our inner voice?*

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### Obstacles

*What are the obstacles to ethical decision-making?*

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## Learning Objectives

Following this workshop, you will be able to do the following:

- Identify the things that can get in the way of making ethical choices.
- Discern what you are really choosing between in an ethical dilemma.
- List the four key Moment-of-Truth questions.
- Use the four key Moment-of-Truth questions to cut through distractions and emotional pressure during the decision-making process.

*Character, not circumstance, makes the person.*

*– Booker T. Washington*

## Moments of Truth

*What is a Moment of Truth?*

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*Do you make that kind of choice only once in your life or over and over again?*

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*What are the four key Moment-of-Truth Questions that can help you cut through the distractions to see the choice you're making?*

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2.

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3.

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4.

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*In addition to the four Moment-of-Truth questions, what else can you do when faced with an ethical dilemma?*

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*When facing a Moment of Truth, what's the most important thing to understand?*

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PREVIEW

*You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence is not an event – it is a habit.*

**– Aristotle**

## Activity: Know What You Are Deciding

Read each scenario and answer the questions that follow. The first scenario is an example.

### EXAMPLE: Scenario Number One

**The scene:** The production line is down because gaskets blew earlier in the day. Jeff's boss, Chris, is on the phone telling him to skip the remaining safety checks and get things up and running again.

**When Jeff and Chris are talking, what decision does it seem like Jeff has to make?** *Whether or not to follow directions from his boss, reinforce his reputation for hitting deadlines, and further his career.*

**What is Jeff really deciding?** *Whether or not to lie and cut corners, which would put his people at risk.*

**What are the distractions that Jeff needs to cut through to make an ethical decision?** *Pressure from his boss; desire to meet a deadline; the rationalization that the machinery has been fixed and is probably fine, so the tests aren't really necessary.*

## Scenario Number Two

**The scene:** Kelly is congratulating Roger and his sales team for closing a big account the day before the quarter ends. Kelly learns that although Roger believes the sale is a sure thing and wants to report it as such to positively impact their bonuses, it hasn't officially closed.

*When Kelly and Roger are talking, what decision does it seem like Kelly has to make?*

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*What is Kelly really deciding?*

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*What are the distractions that Kelly needs to cut through to make an ethical decision?*

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### Scenario Number Three

**The scene:** Danny is a new employee who is receiving product and checking the inventory against the packing slip. His shift supervisor, Mike, sets aside a new product and tells Danny to short the count on the invoice. Mike “mentors” Danny on the product testing part of his job and how the resulting product knowledge benefits customers.

*When Danny and Mike are talking, what decision does it seem like Danny has to make?*

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*What is Danny really deciding?*

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*What are the distractions that Danny needs to cut through to make an ethical decision?*

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## Scenario Number Four

**The scene:** Margo calls her friend Donna and asks her to run a credit report on David Cartwell, the new love interest of their mutual friend, Janie. Margo is worried that David is with Janie only because of her money. She wants to warn Janie about David's shady financial dealings and tells Donna that running a credit report on him will prove to Janie that David is not who he seems.

*When Donna and Margo are talking, what decision does it seem like Donna has to make?*

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*What is Donna really deciding?*

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*What are the distractions that Donna needs to cut through to make an ethical decision?*

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## Scenario Number Five

**The scene:** Kendall is folding clothes when she sees her friend Jessica and Jessica's cousin Jenna holding clothes they're going to try on. Jessica reminds Kendall of the free lattes she gives her when she's working her job and asks Kendall about a "friend-of-a-friend employee discount."

*When Kendall and Jessica are talking, what decision does it seem like Kendall has to make?*

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*What is Kendall really deciding?*

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*What are the distractions that Kendall needs to cut through to make an ethical decision?*

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## Scenario Number Six

**The scene:** Dave is telling his wife, Alicia, about an upcoming Univest deal, when she gets an idea about buying stock. After dreaming about what they would do with the extra money, Alicia tells Dave it's not insider trading because he doesn't work for Univane.

*When Dave and Alicia are talking, what decision does it seem like Dave has to make?*

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*What is Dave really deciding?*

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*What are the distractions that Dave needs to cut through to make an ethical decision?*

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*Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not.*

*—Oprah Winfrey*

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PREVIEW

## The Makings of a Moment of Truth

What three things drive unethical decision-making?

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When we rationalize, are we thinking outwardly or inwardly?

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Who is the focus of our thoughts?

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When we debate over what to do, we are thinking about the following:

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*Try not to become a man of success but, rather, try  
to become a man of value.*

**–Albert Einstein**

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PREVIEW



List some other distractions:

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PREVIEW

# Common Rationalizations

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*"Our character is what we do when we think no one is looking."*

*—H. Jackson Brown Jr.*

## Building Character One Decision at a Time

A rationalization is a way for us to justify a choice we're making. But what else is happening when we make a rationalization? What happens to who we are? What happens to our character?

Desperation, ego, self-interest, pressure from others, pressure from self, and all the rationalizations we create get in the way of ethical decision-making—whether it's a small matter or an important matter.

What can help you cut through all the rationalizations and distractions so you can better see the actual choice you are making?

What are the four Moment-of-Truth Questions?

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2.

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3.

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4.

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*Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters  
cannot be trusted with important matters.*

*—Albert Einstein*

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## Activity: Truth in Small Matters

Read the following scenarios and answer the questions.

### Scenario One—Twenty Bucks

After cashing a check at the bank's drive-through, you pick up your dry cleaning. When you pay, you have \$20 more in your wallet than you think you should have. You think the bank teller may have given you \$20 too much.

*How could you rationalize keeping the money?*

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*Is it the truth?*

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*Is it fair to all?*

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*Is it free of harm?*

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*Am I proud to do it?*

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*What are your choices?*

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*What is the actual choice you are making?*

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**Questions to ponder.** Is inconvenience a reason to steal? Is the idea that it's only \$20 and not \$500 therefore it's okay, okay to steal? Is it more convenient to ignore that little voice that is questioning you than to check with the bank to be sure?

## Scenario Number Two—A Polished Résumé

You've decided to look for a new job. Your brother is a whiz on the computer and has offered to polish your résumé so you can post it online. When you read the new version, you realize he has exaggerated your experiences and listed skills you don't have and jobs you didn't do. He tells you that everyone exaggerates their accomplishments online to increase the chances that their résumé gets a hit.

*How could you rationalize posting the resume your brother created?*

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*Is it the truth?*

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*Is it fair to all?*

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*Is it free of harm?*

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*Am I proud to do it?*

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*What are your choices?*

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*What is the actual choice you are making?*

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**Questions to ponder.** Because you're so unhappy in your current job, are you going to lie to get a new one? Because everyone else does it, are you going to lie too? Are you going to ignore that little voice so that you get what you want quicker?

**Scenario Number Three—A Long Weekend**

It's Thursday afternoon, and a friend calls to ask if you'd like to go away for the weekend. "There are four of us. We're leaving first thing in the morning, and we'll be back Sunday afternoon. Just call in sick. You have the sick days. That's what we're going to do. Come on ... you only live once. Are you in?"

*How could you rationalize calling in sick tomorrow?*

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*Is it the truth?*

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*Is it fair to all?*

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*Is it free of harm?*

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*Am I proud to do it?*

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*What are your choices?*

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*What is the actual choice you are making?*

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**Questions to ponder:** Is your short-term desire to go away for the weekend more important than telling a lie? Are you more concerned about feeling left out or about what your friends may think than telling a lie? Do you feel a sense of entitlement about sick days that is more important than lying to take one?

*Character is much easier kept than recovered.*

— **Thomas Paine**

## Assessment: Everyday Moments of Truth

This is a personal assessment; no one else will see it. It is intended only as a snapshot, not a detailed assessment of your character. It is designed only to get you thinking about a few choices you might make in everyday situations. Read each question and answer honestly.

1. After finding \$100 cash in a hotel safe, you:
  - a. Turn it in to the front desk so the hotel can contact the previous occupant.
  - b. Consider it yours unless the previous occupant calls the hotel about the missing money. If that happens, then you'll turn it in.
  - c. You believe in the finders-keepers philosophy, so you keep the cash. You don't want to give it to the desk clerk, who will probably just pocket the cash anyway.
  
2. A lawyer representing a class action suit asks you to sign an affidavit saying that your life insurance company didn't tell you there would be a service charge attached to your bill each month. When the lawyer tells you that you will receive part of the settlement if you join the class action suit and win, you:
  - a. Say "no" because you expected a service fee on your bill when you chose the monthly payment plan instead of an annual payment. Your auto insurance works the same way.
  - b. Say "yes" because even though you expected a monthly service fee you can't remember whether the life insurance company informed you of the monthly fee or not.
  - c. Say "yes" because the premiums are outrageously high.

3. After dinner, the waitress brings your check. When you realize she forgot to add dessert and coffee to the bill, you:
  - a. Call her over and tell her she forgot to add the dessert and coffee.
  - b. Give her a bigger tip since you saved money on the check. You'd rather give her the money than a big restaurant chain.
  - c. You pay the bill. Your meal was overcooked anyway.
  
4. At the end of a 30-day Get Healthy campaign at work, you sign your Exercise Tracking Sheet. When you realize you are one day short of hitting the 20-day, 20-minutes-per-day minimum for getting the prize of a paid day off, you:
  - a. Sign the form and turn it in.
  - b. Initial another day, knowing that you exercised more than the required 20 minutes on each day you exercised.
  - c. Initial another day because you would have exercised more except that you had to work so much overtime this month.
  
5. You and a guest are invited to a black-tie New Year's Eve party. Accepting the invitation means buying an appropriate outfit. You:
  - a. RSVP "no" because you don't want the expense of having to buy something to wear.
  - b. RSVP "yes" and buy a new outfit, with plans to return it. Because you're going to wear it once, you'll say you didn't like the way it fit, and you'll ask for a store credit.

- c. RSVP “yes” and buy a new outfit, with plans to return it for a refund. You’ll dry clean it and put the tags back on it so nobody will know it was worn.
6. Distracted, you pay for your merchandise but forget about the pack of gum you opened while shopping. You don’t think about it until you get home. You:
  - a. Make a mental note to stop by the store on your way to work the next day. You’ll buy another pack of gum and tell the cashier to ring up two.
  - b. It was an accident. You’ll try to remember to tell the cashier the next time you’re in the store.
  - c. You figure it’s only 79 cents, which is hardly a big deal. It’s not like you were shoplifting or anything.
7. You are visiting out-of-state friends, and they offer you the use of their neighborhood resident card so you can use the area beaches and parks free of charge. They write down their address so you’ll have it when you sign in as a resident to receive the neighborhood pass for your car. You:
  - a. Thank them for their hospitality but decline their offer.
  - b. Take the card. The beaches and parks won’t be busy with other residents since you’re going to be using the card only on weekdays.
  - c. Take the card and plan to use your friends’ names if anyone asks.
8. Your boss gives you \$50 to pick up the catered lunch from the Italian deli for today’s sales contest kickoff celebration. You have a cappuccino while you’re waiting for the order to be ready, and the clerk adds it to the bill. When you return to the office, you:

- a. Give your boss the change from the \$50 as well as the \$3.79 you spent on the cappuccino.
  - b. Give your boss the change from the \$50 and tell him you owe him \$3.79 for a cappuccino.
  - c. Give your boss the change from the \$50 and consider the cost of the cappuccino your tip for running errands.
9. On your way to work, you realize you still haven't sent the binders and reports for next week's meeting. Doing it today means you have to send it express instead of ground, otherwise you can't be confident that the shipment will arrive in time. When you realize how much more it costs to send it by air, you:
- a. Tell your manager of your \$300 mistake.
  - b. Decide not to say anything because your manager will see the shipment when she attends the meeting next week.
  - c. Tell your manager that the delivery service couldn't guarantee ground delivery on time because they are short-staffed, so your only option was to send the shipment by air.
10. Your company has a gift policy that prevents employees from accepting any gifts with a value of more than \$50 and no more than three gifts in a year. The policy also requires that you inform your manager of the gift. A contractor you have known for several years calls and offers you a Super Bowl ticket.
- a. Since the offer has no bearing on business because you no longer work directly with the contractor, you hope for the best and ask your manager for an exception to the policy.

- b. Confident you're not compromising a work relationship because you no longer work directly with the contractor, you decide to go and then tell your manager about it afterward.
- c. Since you no longer work directly with the contractor, you decide it's not a business gift. You plan to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and not say anything.

PREVIEW

## How Did You Do?

If the majority of your responses are “a” and you have been honest with yourself, then it is likely that you practice ethics every day. You think about the actual choices you make and choose to be honest and fair. You have integrity.

If the majority of your responses are “b” and “c,” then self-interest and rationalizations drive your behaviors. You should consider making the four Moment-of-Truth questions a part of your decision-making process so you’re not so quick to justify your actions. If you use them regularly, you will be able to quickly cut through to the heart of both small and important matters.

If you have five “a” responses and five “b” or “c” responses, look at when you rationalize your behavior. Is there a pattern? Do you justify unethical choices in small matters and not important matters? Use the four Moment-of-Truth questions until they become a part of all your decisions, and you’ll continue to build character and integrity.

*Men's minds are too ready to excuse guilt in themselves.*

– **Titus Livius, Roman historian and philosopher**