

Ethics Movie Training

The VADM James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, located in Luce Hall in room 201, offers a set of facilitator guides centered on ethical themes explored in recent film. The Ingersoll Library, located in the Stockdale Center, houses many movies that focus on ethical dilemmas. Each summer, newly graduated Ensigns and Second Lieutenants work with Center staff in crafting discussion guides around these films.

This document is the second collection of such guides. Each facilitator's guide in this document is a self-contained brief on the film it focuses upon.

Each guide first presents the Stockdale Center's ethical decision-making model, based upon research on the psychology of ethical decision making. The model presents a procedure that has been distilled from that research. The four-step procedure also allows incorporation of more traditional ethical theories and outlooks, while paying attention to stresses and emotions involved in such dilemmas. The guides then give brief synopses of each film. They conclude with a selection of carefully crafted discussion questions that focus on the ethical dimensions of the films, and the psychological and emotional factors that are portrayed.

Each of these films can be checked out for use in Saturday training or other such venues. They can also be found at the Nimitz Library. Midshipmen may also contact the Stockdale center (ethics@usna.edu) if there is a movie not currently available that they would like to have included in the library. If the suggestion is approved, a discussion guide will be created for that movie. Each year, a selection of new discussion guides is added to the library.

This volume presents discussion guides for the following movies:

- Groundhog Day
- King Arthur
- Law Abiding Citizen
- Lord of War
- Philadelphia
- The Shawshank Redemption
- Source Code
- Spiderman
- Taken
- The Truman Show

Training Officers/Sergeants: If you are interested in using this program for SMT/GMT or other purposes, please contact the center to set up a time to check out the movie and receive guidance on the use of the training aid.

Thank you for using our resources. We hope you find them stimulating and thought-provoking.

Groundhog Day

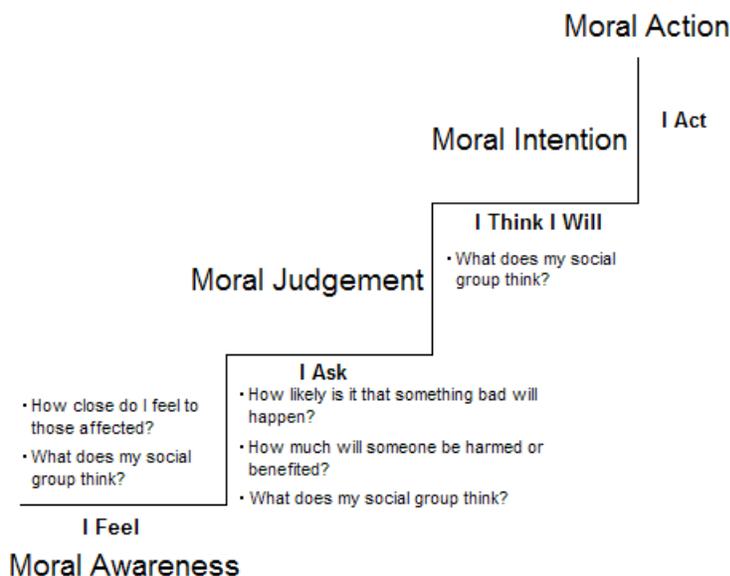
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie is about a TV reporter named Phil Connors. He is a self-centered man who cares nothing about covering Groundhog Day in [Punxsutawney](#), Pennsylvania. A snow storm causes the news team to stay in the town overnight. When Phil wakes up the next day, it is Groundhog Day again. This cycle continues for a long time until one day Phil changes his poor outlook on life, and the day after Groundhog Day finally comes.

Ethical Decision-Making Basics:

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The questions at each step reflect the work of Thomas Jones. They show how people's ability to make ethical decisions is affected by different moral intensity factors. The most common ones include:

- How much a particular social group (peers, friends, family) agrees that a given action is good or bad and what they will think about the decision maker
- How close the decision maker feels to the people affected by your decision
- How much the decision maker's actions harm or benefit someone
- How likely it is that something good or something bad will happen

Here's how the steps in the model work.

In the "I feel" step, you feel something about the situation in your body. Decide if this situation raises a moral issue by asking:

1. Am I violating my moral emotions if I do nothing?
2. Am I putting anyone at risk if I do nothing?
3. Is something bad likely to happen here?

Check whether moral intensity factors are affecting you by asking:

1. Would my social group see a moral issue here?
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In the "I ask" step, weigh different choices to distinguish right from wrong, better from worse, and between competing tensions. To weigh those choices, ask the following:

1. If I take action, is that fair or unfair? Morally right or morally wrong?
2. What would someone I respect think is the best option?
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Ask whether moral intensity factors are affecting your judgment:

1. What would my social group think about my actions?
2. How much harm could come to someone if I take action? What if I don't take action?
3. How likely is it that this situation will turn out badly if I don't take action? What about if I do take action?

In the "I think I will" step, decide what to do or not to do, using the questions below:

1. What do I think I should do?
2. How much will what other people think about me influence my decision?
3. Do I intend to act on that decision?

In the "I act" step, carry out your intention, even if there is great opposition. These questions may be helpful:

1. Do I follow through on this intention?
2. What may prevent me from acting on my intention?
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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Groundhog Day* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Phil is an extremely self-centered person who cares nothing for the people of Punxsutawney. He finds the town he is reporting on unsatisfying. Is it ever acceptable to treat others as second-class citizens, as Phil does?
2. Phil wakes up the day after the blizzard forces his team to stay in Punxsutawney and realizes he is repeating the past day over again. He is confused, but uses the day for his own benefit. With each repeat of the day, he gains more knowledge about the people around him. Is it morally acceptable for him to use this knowledge for his own personal gain? What would you do with the knowledge? (Use the model to work through the dilemma for a particular scene.)
3. Eventually, after many repeats, Phil tries to kill himself to end the cycle. Is suicide ever an ethical solution to a dilemma or hopeless situation? Why or why not? How would you have handled the situation?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. The lies flow from Phil throughout the movie as he realizes he can say whatever he wants, because the day will merely reset. Since the people he lies to will have no recollection of his lies, are the lies harmless? Is it still wrong for him to lie? If a lie will not affect someone in the long-term, is it okay?
2. After a time, Phil knows Groundhog Day inside and out. Is it right for him to interfere with the events of the day, regardless of his intentions? Should he let the events unfold as they should, or is it permissible for him to play "God" and change events?
3. Phil uses the knowledge he has to manipulate Rita into falling in love with him. Is this acceptable? Should Phil instead use this knowledge less for his advantage but in some non-objectionable way to win her over? Is this even possible given his level of knowledge? Has his manipulation and invasion of her privacy made this impossible?

Examples/Discussion

1. If you had Phil's knowledge and foresight, knowing exactly what was going to happen tomorrow, what would you do with that knowledge? Why?
2. Is there such a thing as fate? If so, and if it were possible, is it ever morally okay to control or modify "fate"?

King Arthur

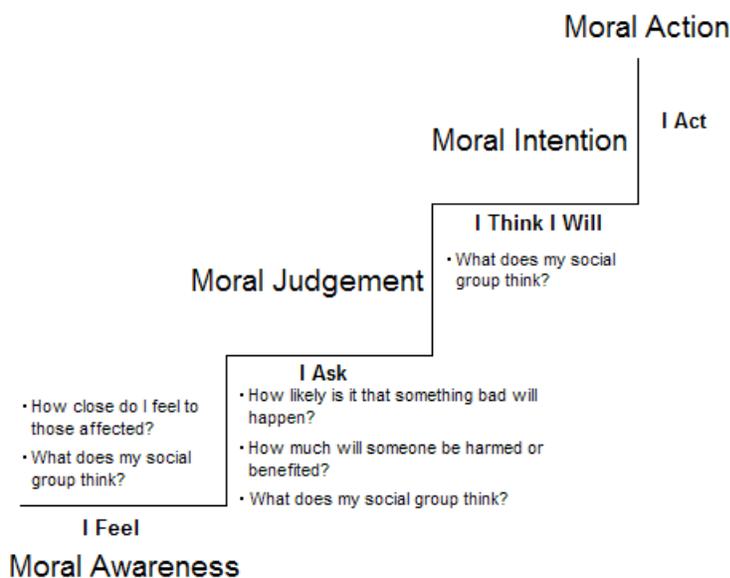
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie follows a Roman officer, Arthur, and his knights through a campaign against barbarians in what is modern-day Britain. Several times, the unjust actions of Roman officials leave Arthur questioning his faith in the Roman government. During a dangerous campaign, forced upon his men after the expiration of their contracts, Arthur's allegiance begins to waver. Arthur, who considers his knights as equals, allows them the final choice of whether or not to fight with him in a battle solely of his own choosing.

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- How likely it is that something good or something bad will happen

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Check whether moral intensity factors are affecting you by asking:

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In the "I ask" step, *weigh different choices to distinguish right from wrong, better from worse, and between competing tensions*. To weigh those choices, ask the following:

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In the "I think I will" step, *decide what to do or not to do*, using the questions below:

1. What do I think I should do?
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3. Do I intend to act on that decision?

In the "I act" step, *carry out your intention, even if there is great opposition*. These questions may be helpful:

1. Do I follow through on this intention?
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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *King Arthur* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. After they had completed their 15-year terms of duty, Arthur and his knights are told by Roman officials that they must undertake a final campaign before they will be released. Knowing that this will be their most dangerous campaign, Arthur is torn between ties to his country and loyalty to his comrades. How would you decide what to do if you were Arthur? What parallels are there for officers in the 21st Century?
2. In one scene, Lancelot argues that the mission will seal their doom. He asks Arthur, "Do you believe in this mission?" Other than citing his charge from the Roman government, Arthur has no answer. What would you do in this situation if you were Arthur? How would you make the decision? Could you fight in a campaign you didn't agree with, or one that you thought was a foolhardy enterprise? (Use the model to work through the dilemma.)
3. Carrying out the mission, Arthur and his knights arrive at their destination, a village, only to find that the man they have been sent to rescue is corrupt. He starves and enslaves the villagers while posing as a prophet of God. If you were Arthur, would you rescue the man and his family, putting your knights in further danger? How would you make the decision? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Arthur applies principles of leadership he learned from his mentor, a Roman bishop. The central focus of the Bishop's teaching was a premise of the equality of all men. Eventually, Arthur learns that his mentor has been executed by the Roman government as a heretic, while he has been out in the field with his men. This leaves Arthur disillusioned. Do you believe that Arthur's loss of faith in the Roman government is justified? As an officer in the Roman Army, should his allegiance remain to the government regardless of its actions? Is he showing true allegiance to Rome if he continues on his mission?
2. Arthur falls in love with a Woad prisoner of war after he rescues her from the cruel treatment of one of the Roman governors. The Woad are enemy combatants. Does this lead to a conflict of interest for him?
3. In one scene, Merlin, the leader of the Woad, asks Arthur to aid him in his fight against the invading Saxons. He tells Arthur that there is no longer a fight between Rome and the Woad. The Romans have left the area. What would you do if you were Arthur? Do you believe "the enemy of my enemy is my friend"?

Examples/Discussion

1. Lancelot once tells Arthur, “You fight for a world that will never exist. There will always be a battlefield.” Do you agree with Lancelot? Why or why not? Does this mean that we should never fight battles?
2. The movie makes it clear that the Roman government, Arthur, and his knights all fight for different reasons. The Roman government fights to conquer land, Arthur fights for his religion and country, and his knights because of their contracts and to earn eventually their freedom. Which reasons do you believe are just causes for fighting? How would you mesh these causes into one motivation for action, if you were Arthur leading these knights?
3. Arthur eventually chooses to stay in the land of the Woad and to become their king, hence the title *King Arthur*. Do you believe that he made the right choice? How would you have resolved your conflicting loyalties? What would you have done, considering the Roman intentions during the war?

Law Abiding Citizen

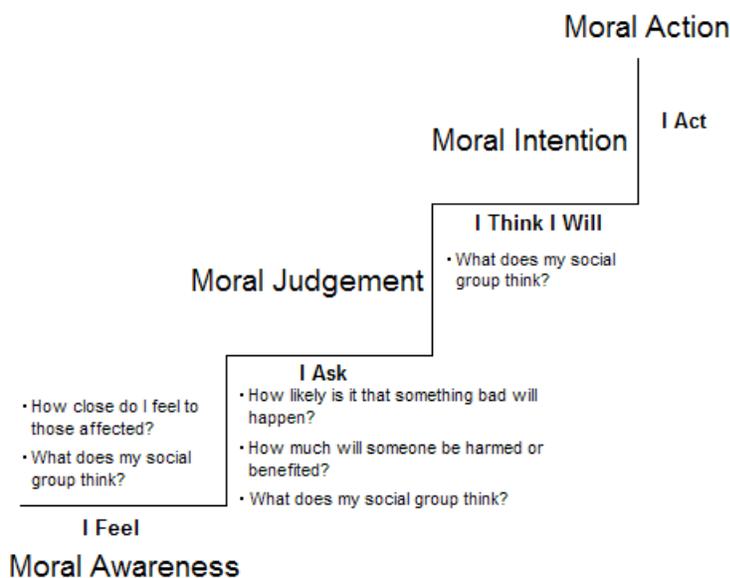
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

In this movie, Clyde Shelton fights a corrupted legal system. After Shelton's wife and daughter are murdered, one of the two assailants is given a plea bargain that ensures him minor jail time. Shelton hatches an elaborate plot aimed not only at this murderer, but also at the legal system as a whole, which he feels has not delivered justice in his case. He succeeds in killing the murderer and subsequently plots against key players in the justice system from his jail cell. The relationships between revenge, vigilantism, and justice are explored in this thriller.

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Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Clyde Shelton's attorney, Nick Rice, has a 96 percent conviction rate. In order to keep this number high, he offers Darby, the murderer, a behind-the-scenes deal in which he will serve minor jail time if he pleads guilty to third-degree murder and informs on his accomplice. Is it morally acceptable for Rice to offer this deal to Darby? Honorable or dishonorable? (Use the model to work through the dilemma.)
2. Clyde Shelton uses brutal torture techniques to maim and slaughter his family's murderer, Darby. Eventually, police find Darby in 25 pieces. Given the vile crimes that Darby committed against Shelton and his family, is it right for Shelton to take revenge in this way? If he had chosen another, less brutal means of getting revenge, would that have been acceptable? Is revenge ever a morally permissible motive for action? Why or why not?
3. In one scene, Nick Rice becomes convinced that Shelton is using an outside accomplice as he plots revenge from his jail cell. He convinces the judge to revoke some of Shelton's basic rights in order to give him less access to the outside world. Is this ethical?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Clyde Shelton uses his engineering and CIA skills to take revenge on the American justice system. Given the fact that the American Society of Engineers and the CIA both have codes of ethics, is it acceptable for Shelton to use his skills against the justice system?
2. Several scenes show Shelton taking revenge against individuals who may not have had direct roles in allowing Darby a minor conviction. These people include Darby's attorney, the judge, the DA, and the mayor. Shelton seems to believe that these individuals have forfeited their innocence. Is Shelton justified in blaming these individuals for their failure to uphold justice? What about in taking revenge against them?
3. Shelton's aim is to teach the professionals within the legal system that morality has a role in law as well. Do you believe that U.S. law and morality are separate? Should they be separate? Is Shelton's use of immoral means to further moral ends justifiable? Is it ever justifiable to further moral ends by immoral ends? Why or why not?

Examples/Discussion

1. Darby receives a much lesser sentence than he may have originally been awarded by giving information on his accomplice. Do you believe that deals or "plea bargains" are ethical?
2. Shelton undertakes an elaborate revenge plot in order to teach Nick Rice a lesson about justice. If you felt that you had been wronged in the same way, how would you have chosen to explain yourself or "teach a lesson" to Rice?

3. Do you believe that vigilante justice is acceptable when the courts fail to achieve justice? Why or why not?

Lord of War

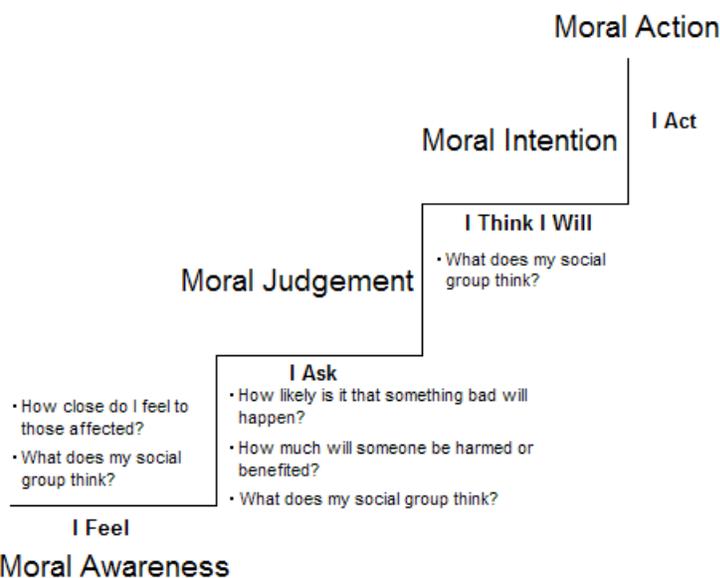
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This black comedy centers around the life of a Ukrainian international arms dealer named Yuri Orlov. Born in the Ukraine and an immigrant to the United States, Orlov grew up in a rough neighborhood. After seeing mobsters kill potential assassins, he decides to begin selling guns. His business takes him around the globe, as he quickly becomes the largest arms dealer in the world, dealing to governments, dictators, and warlords, with allegiance to no one. The film is a powerful examination of the amorality of international arms dealing and the effects of emotional compartmentalization.

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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Lord of War* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Yuri Orlov keeps his entire arms business a secret from his family, pretending instead to be a businessman. Is it acceptable for him to hide his dealings from his family, because their ignorance of the situation keeps them safe? (Work through the steps of the model to answer the question.)
2. In one scene, an African warlord buys Yuri's guns with diamonds, potentially blood diamonds. Yuri argues that because this is more a trade than a sale, it is better than dealing in standard currency, morally-speaking. Do you agree? Why?
3. At the end of the movie, Yuri Orlov rationalizes his actions and describes himself as "a necessary evil." Do you believe that it is morally acceptable for Orlov to work for the United States while also selling arms to warlords and dictators who are fighting the allies of the United States? How does he justify this?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Orlov is described as an "equal opportunity merchant of death." Is it right for Orlov to remain a freelancer, or should he take sides? Why or why not?
2. Yuri bought a significant amount of weaponry from the fallen Soviet Union's army. Is it better that someone buy and distribute these weapons, or should they have remained in the possession of the Russian state or another country, or, finally, should they have been destroyed?
3. In several scenes, we see Yuri's brother entering and re-entering rehab after failed attempts to clean up. He has been using drugs to mask his guilt about helping the amoral Yuri in his arms dealing. Yuri feels sorry for his brother and lets him have cocaine before entering rehab each time. Should Yuri enable his brother's habit or refuse the cocaine, thus allowing his brother to hate him and potentially cut him off?

Examples/Discussion

1. Suppose you were an arms dealer, contracted by the U.S. Government and by others. After seeing the results of arms trafficking, such as the genocide in Africa, would you continue to deal arms? Would you deal to only one side?
2. To protect the United States, is it ever justified for the government to illegally sell arms to other nations to foster defeat of U.S. enemies? Is it justifiable for the U.S. government to knowingly contract sellers that also supply its enemies? Why or why not?

3. Is it morally acceptable to separate or compartmentalize issues associated with your job from your personal life, as Yuri attempts to do? Why or why not? Draw from your own life to answer this question.

Philadelphia

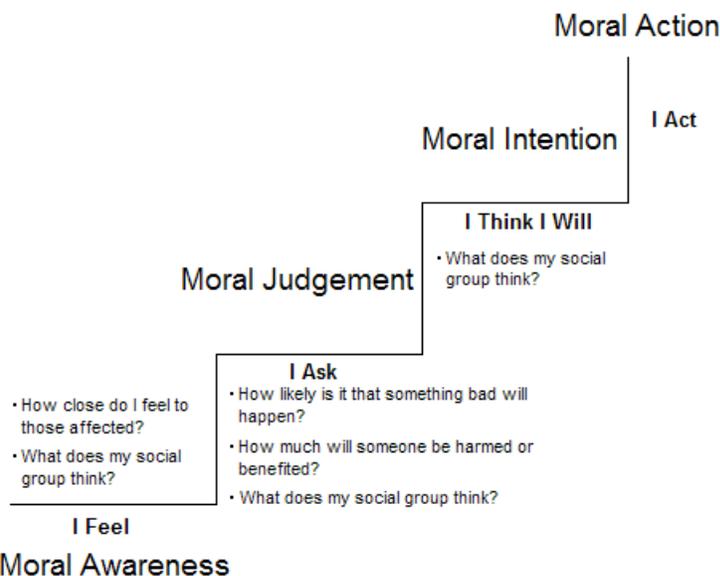
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie focuses on a man named Andrew Beckett. He is a lawyer in the largest law firm in Philadelphia. He is a gay man who has contracted AIDS through promiscuity. A coworker notices a lesion on his neck and reports it to higher-ups. Beckett is subsequently fired under the false accusation that he lost documents vital to a big case. Beckett attempts to hire Joe Miller (a homophobic man) to be his attorney. Miller declines the job. Later, he changes his mind and takes the case. Beckett and Miller work together, and they even become good friends. They win the case, but Beckett dies from his disease.

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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Philadelphia* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Andrew Beckett is fired because of a supposed misplaced document. In reality, he was fired because he is gay and has AIDS. Is it ever right to assume that a lifestyle choice or medical condition can make an individual incompetent or ineffective at his work? If so, when? If not, why not?
2. Joe Miller refuses the case because he is homophobic. Suppose he simply disapproves of the lifestyle, but is not phobic. Is it morally acceptable for him to refuse the case based on his own values? Should his professional role as a lawyer restrict his acting in this way? Does he have a professional duty to take the case? What would you do if you were Miller and held his values? (Use the model to work through to an answer.)
3. Andrew Beckett hid the fact that he had AIDS from his employer. Does he have a moral obligation to be forthright with his colleagues about his medical condition? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Because Beckett has AIDS, is it his responsibility to inform and educate his coworkers about his condition? Should he attempt to make them feel more comfortable with it? On the other hand, is it morally OK for him to keep his condition secret?
2. Miller overcomes his homophobia as well as his fear of contracting AIDS from Beckett. Miller sees Beckett as a regular man and even befriends him. Is ignorance an excuse for Miller's intolerance, or were his values askew? Can someone's moral values truly change?
3. Who is more to blame in this movie: Beckett for not telling his employer about his condition, or the company for being intolerant towards Beckett? Why?

Examples/Discussion

1. Is it ever morally permissible to judge someone for his personal lifestyle choices, or should every person be given a fair opportunity to perform his/her job without regard to their personal life? Think about real-life situations, such as that of Tiger Woods.
2. Do you believe that an establishment such as the military, which has only recently allowed open homosexuality, can ever get beyond the preconceptions and stereotypes associated with homosexuality?
3. Should withholding of medical information from employers be grounds for dismissal? Why or why not?

The Shawshank Redemption

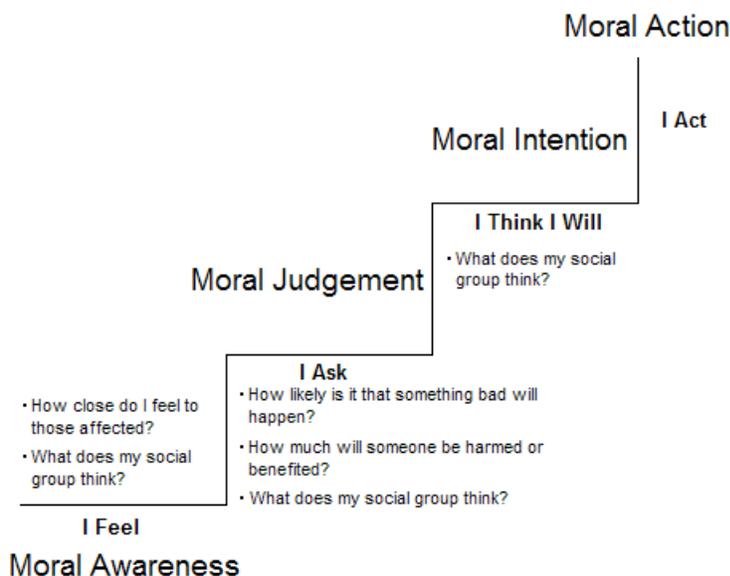
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie follows Andy Dufresne, who is falsely convicted for the murder of his wife and her lover. He is sent to Shawshank prison which is under the control of corrupt Warden Norton. After some early troubles, Andy finds his niche, along with a best friend named Red. The warden uses Andy to aid in his illegal money laundering. Andy bides his time, and over the years, plans an escape. He eventually breaks out of the prison and leaves the country, regaining his freedom.

Ethical Decision-Making Basics:

Ethics can be described as standards of behavior that one uses to decide how to respond to situations that have a moral component. In ethical decision making, a person uses standards of behavior to come to a decision and then act. Although this process may seem intuitive, research shows that there are steps we all take in making ethical decisions. The four-step model shown below, based on the work of James Rest, describes how we move from moral awareness through moral action.



The questions at each step reflect the work of Thomas Jones. They show how people's ability to make ethical decisions is affected by different moral intensity factors. The most common ones include:

- How much a particular social group (peers, friends, family) agrees that a given action is good or bad and what they will think about the decision maker
- How close the decision maker feels to the people affected by your decision
- How much the decision maker's actions harm or benefit someone
- How likely it is that something good or something bad will happen

Here's how the steps in the model work.

In the "I feel" step, you feel something about the situation in your body. Decide if this situation raises a moral issue by asking:

1. Am I violating my moral emotions if I do nothing?
2. Am I putting anyone at risk if I do nothing?
3. Is something bad likely to happen here?

Check whether moral intensity factors are affecting you by asking:

1. Would my social group see a moral issue here?
2. How close do I feel to the people involved in this situation?

In the "I ask" step, weigh different choices to distinguish right from wrong, better from worse, and between competing tensions. To weigh those choices, ask the following:

1. If I take action, is that fair or unfair? Morally right or morally wrong?
2. What would someone I respect think is the best option?
3. If I take action, is that decision in line with my organization's or my society's rules and culture?

Ask whether moral intensity factors are affecting your judgment:

1. What would my social group think about my actions?
2. How much harm could come to someone if I take action? What if I don't take action?
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In the "I think I will" step, decide what to do or not to do, using the questions below:

1. What do I think I should do?
2. How much will what other people think about me influence my decision?
3. Do I intend to act on that decision?

In the "I act" step, carry out your intention, even if there is great opposition. These questions may be helpful:

1. Do I follow through on this intention?
2. What may prevent me from acting on my intention?
3. What may help me follow through on my intention?

This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *The Shawshank Redemption* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Andy's wife had an affair because she had grown apart from him. Is an affair ever morally right in cases where love is completely lost? Under what, if any, circumstances is having an affair morally right?
2. In this prison, it was routine for guards to beat inmates for infractions. The beatings were administered for almost any crime, and were usually more brutal than the crime deserved. Is it ever acceptable for a punishment to be worse than the violation merits? (Use the model to work through the dilemma.)
3. Warden Norton kills Tommy to cover up the fact that Andy is innocent. Is it ever okay to take the life of a man to conceal a truth? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)

Other Ethical Questions:

1. The warden treated Andy and the other inmates terribly. Is it morally acceptable for Andy to seek revenge on the warden, eventually causing his suicide, given the warden's awful behavior? Is Andy in any way morally responsible for the suicide? What would you have done if you were in Andy's situation?
2. Should the prisoners at Shawshank be treated with dignity, or did they forfeit that right upon committing the crime that put them there?
3. Andy received two life sentences as an innocent man. Is it morally acceptable for our judicial system to accept less than 100 percent accuracy on guilty convictions? Why or why not?

Examples/Discussion

1. The warden of the prison eventually loses his mind and commits suicide. Do you believe that suicide is ever justified? What would you have done differently in the situation, if you were the warden?
2. Do you believe that prison actually rehabilitates criminals, or is it merely punishment? What should its purpose be?
3. Considering what Andy does and the corrupt environment of the jail, is revenge a morally acceptable motivation for Andy?

Source Code

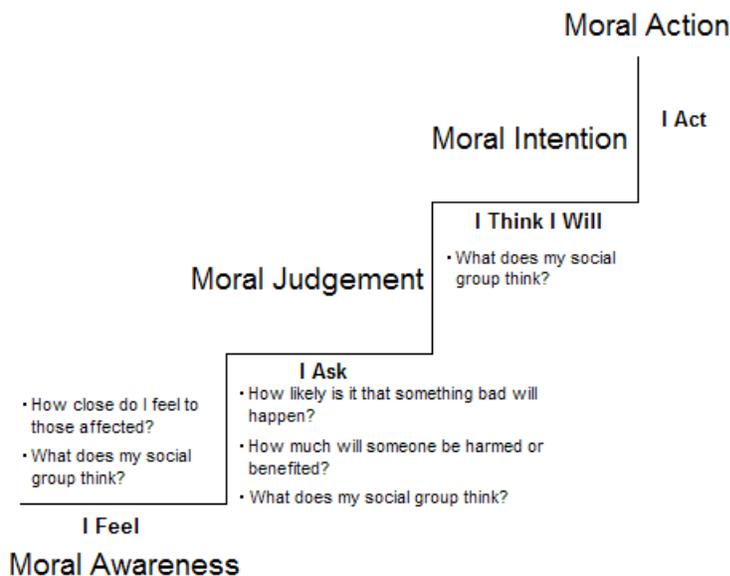
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie is about a soldier, Colter Stevens, who has been killed in Iraq. His body is maimed beyond repair, but the government has kept him on life support so that his brain continues to live because he is a perfect match for a secret program known as “Source Code.” He is used without his consent. Via “Source Code,” his mind is repeatedly inserted into another man’s body on a train to Chicago, a man now dead, due to a bombing of the train. His job is to find and stop the bomb on the train, and another planted in the heart of the city, while discovering the identity of the bomber. Every time he is inserted, he repeats the last eight minutes of the train ride. He is then required to repeat those minutes until he can prevent the bombings. He must relive the passenger’s last moments and death each time he fails to discover the bombs and bomber.

Ethical Decision-Making Basics:

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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Source Code* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Dr. Rutledge uses Capt. Stevens, originally against his will and without explanation, because using him will improve the technology and, more importantly, protect other people. Do you believe that it is okay to use people, potentially against their will, for the good of others? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)
2. Stevens, while in the body of Sean, the train passenger, deceives Christina and never tells her who he really is or what is going on. She eventually falls in love with him. Is it right for him to lie to her about what is going on and use that to help carry out his mission? (Use the model to work through the dilemma.)
3. Goodwin, Colter's contact within the agency, continually avoids Stevens' questions about what he is doing and what is going on. Since they are using him to do their work, does Goodwin have a moral obligation to explain what is going on? How might Rutledge respond to this question?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. If it were possible, should technology such as the Source Code be used? Is it ethical to alter the past to save lives?
2. Given the situation, do you believe that it was permissible for Stevens to be recruited for Source Code against his will? What would you have done in this situation if you were Stevens? Does he have a duty here to forgo his own interests?
3. Would Stevens' situation be morally acceptable if he had been afforded the opportunity to sign up for the program before his death?
4. Would it be acceptable to place Stevens on life support, ask for his consent, and take him off life support if he refused the program but requested to be "killed"?

Examples/Discussion

1. Is it ever okay to impress individuals into service against their will?
2. If millions of lives can be saved by the torture and eventual death of one man, is such action justifiable?

Spiderman

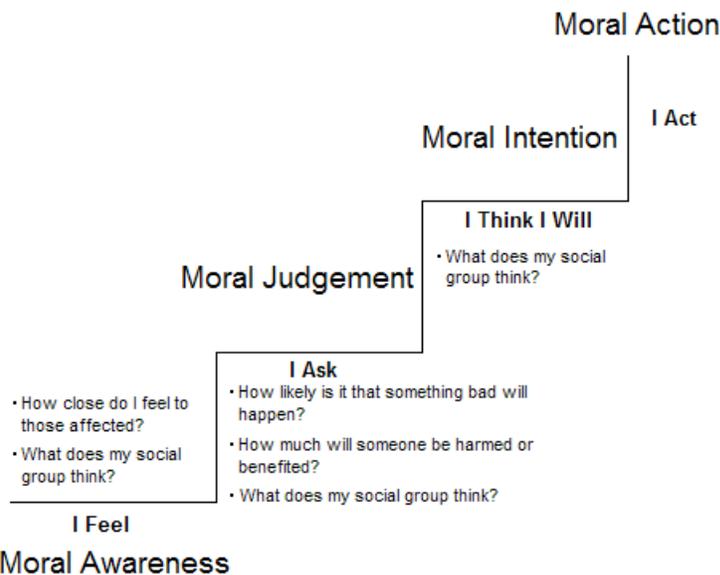
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie depicts the journey of Peter Parker from an unpopular high school student into a superhero named Spiderman. When a DNA-enhanced spider bites him in a science lab, he takes on superhuman powers. He is often forced to choose between pursuing his normal life and the potential his superpowers present for serving others, at the expense of himself, his family, and his friends.

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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Spiderman* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. In several scenes, Peter Parker uses his secret identity as Spiderman to take up-close action photographs of himself. In doing so, he makes money from the local paper and eventually lands a job that he has long wanted. Is it acceptable for him to use his secret identity for his personal gain?
2. Attempting to cause despair for Spiderman, the Green Goblin forces him to choose between saving the life of the woman he loves and saving a trolley full of innocent children. What would you do and why? (Use the model to work through the dilemma.)
3. After the final battle, Mr. Osborn asks Peter not to tell his son Harry that he was the Green Goblin. Do you think that Peter is obligated to tell Harry the truth? What would you have done? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Peter Parker does not tell anyone that he is Spiderman for fear of endangering his loved ones. Is it morally acceptable for him to hide his true life, sometimes lying to cover his actions? Does he owe them the truth?
2. One day while Peter Parker is at school, his powers begin developing. He accidentally assaults the school bully when his web mistakenly goes off. He is forced to defend himself when the bully tries to fight back. Peter eventually fends the bully off with what appears to be excessive force. Is it morally acceptable for Peter to use his full powers in his personal life to defend himself, given that no one knows that he has the powers? Why or why not?
3. From the perspective of the Green Goblin, is it acceptable to exploit your enemy's loved ones in order to break them down or gain information from them?

Examples/Discussion

1. At the end of the movie, Peter's comments on his power saying, "This is my gift, my curse." Do you think Peter Parker is morally obliged to serve others by being a superhero? What would you do if you were given the powers that he attained?
2. Peter's boss at the newspaper, J. Jonah Jameson, continually twists the news in order to attract customers. He changes his headlines from portraying Spiderman as a hero to describing him as a menace. Is it justifiable for him, or any media mogul, to manipulate the facts to attract customers? Do you believe media organizations can operate like a business, or do they owe the citizens the true facts, neutrally presented?
3. Should Peter Parker tell anyone else, such as the military, how he got his superpowers? Do you think that the world would be safer or more dangerous if there were an army of Spiderman-like soldiers?

4. The United States is similar to Spiderman due to its military/technological advantages. What are its responsibilities to itself and the world at large? What can it learn from Peter?

Taken

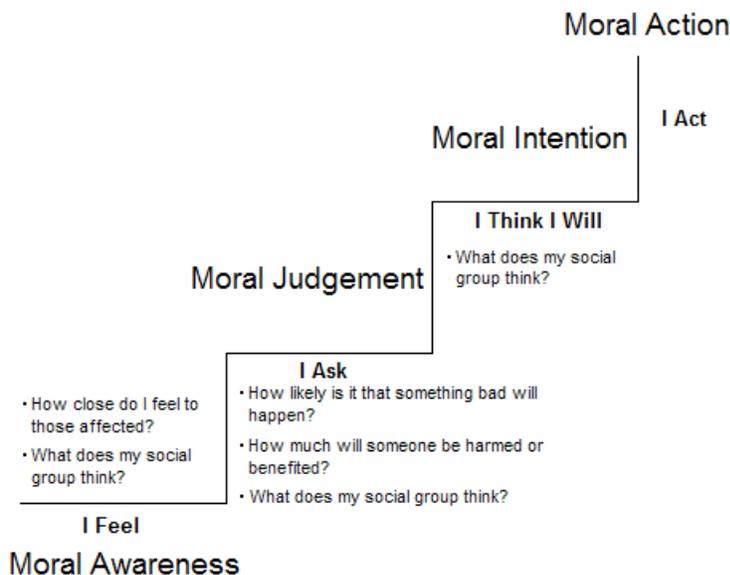
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie follows an ex-CIA agent, Brian Mills, who is trying to mend a broken relationship with his daughter and ex-wife, which fell apart during his career. When his underage daughter is kidnapped by human traffickers on a trip to Europe with a friend, he tries to rescue her, using violent means.

Ethical Decision-Making Basics:

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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Taken* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. Is it right for Brian Mills' ex-wife to help her daughter lie and set up a trip to Europe in defiance of her father's wishes? As the father of the girl (who is underage), is he entitled to stop her from going to Europe? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)
2. The movie depicts Mills torturing and killing many people he believes to be involved in the human trafficking organization. Is it morally acceptable for Mills to use these individuals as a means to his end? (Consider not only the individuals directly involved in the criminal activity, but also those individuals who may have no involvement, such as the French politician's wife.)
3. In one scene, Mills is using a makeshift electric chair to torture a suspected kidnapper. At the end of the scene, he leaves the electricity on and walks out of the room, leaving the man to die. Is Mills' murder of the suspect a necessary step in achieving his daughter's rescue? If so, does that morally excuse the act? Why or why not?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Is Brian Mills justified in his vigilante justice approach to rescuing his daughter and bypassing and disregarding international law and law enforcement agencies?
2. Do you think Mills' reaction to the situation would have been different had his son been kidnapped vice his daughter? What about the reaction from local police and governments? Would they show more or less concern? Should gender have an effect on the urgency of reaction?
3. Do you think Mills would have gone to these extremes for any girl that he knew? Are his actions only excusable due to the fact that his daughter was the individual who was kidnapped? Are they morally permissible? Was he obliged to act in this way? Defend your answer.

Examples/Discussion

1. Does it matter what you as an individual think about the people giving you orders, who are higher in the chain of command? Does it matter if your sailors/troops know what you think of these people? Does it matter if your family knows what you think?
2. What is an acceptable use of force in a situation such as this? Were the high numbers of casualties within the trafficking ring tolerable?
3. If governments around the world are not seeking justice in areas such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, etc., at what point, and to what extent, should the United States intervene militarily?

Taxi to the Dark Side

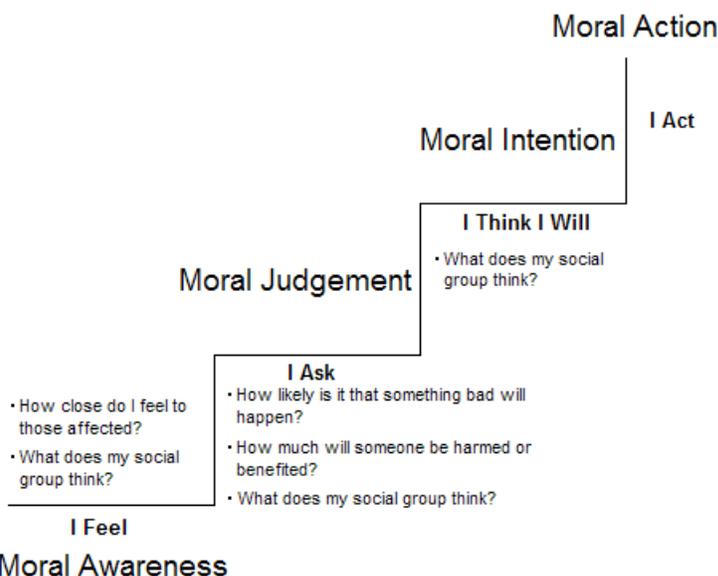
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This documentary explores the changes in U.S. interrogation techniques after the 9/11 attacks and during the early stages of the War on Terror. It does this by telling the story of a taxi driver, who was detained as a suspected terrorist and subsequently killed in the prison at Bagram a scant five days after arriving. The documentary shows the U.S. government's deviation from the Geneva Conventions interrogation guidelines in the case of detained combatants that are from trans-national terror groups and therefore not soldiers from signatory nations to the conventions. It implicates higher levels in the chain of command as responsible for the moral corruption involved in the case of the death of this prisoner and other similar detention scandals.

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This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *Taxi to the Dark Side* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. In one interview excerpted in the film, Vice President Cheney explains to a reporter that intelligence forces are going to have to work “quietly without any discussion,” “use any means at our disposal,” and get “mean, dirty, and nasty.” Is it acceptable to lower our moral standards in order to compete with an enemy of lower moral standards? Why or why not? (Work through the steps in the model shown above.)
2. One of the guards who served at Bagram and Abu Ghraib describes the meaning of the acronym “PUC,” as standing for “person under U.S. custody.” He claims that the United States intentionally used this term to dehumanize the detainees so that the guards and interrogators would see them as less than human. Is he right about this? Assuming that his statement is true, is it okay to discount the humanity of individuals linked with terrorist organizations in order to obtain intelligence? Is it possible to obtain information without dehumanization? Is it possible to use enhanced interrogation techniques without dehumanizing, or are they necessarily dehumanizing?
3. The commentator states that the “Dereliction of Duty” charge against the senior MP, Captain Beiring, was dropped due to the fact that his “duty” was never made clear to him. Was the incident a question of duty or of failure of moral character? Should he have known that the actions were wrong without his duties being explicitly defined?
4. John Yoo, legal counsel for the president, drafted a set of clarifications to the vague principles of the Geneva Conventions. Essentially, he stated that terrorists should not be granted the protections guaranteed to conventional soldiers and POWs from nations signatory to the Geneva Conventions. Do you believe this reasoning is morally sound? Are there any dangers in granting full Geneva protections to terrorists, or should all types of combatants be granted the same protections and privileges?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. The military police at the lowest level of the chain of command were held accountable for the atrocities at Abu Ghraib. Do you believe that their individual lack of moral character was to blame for their actions, or was the culprit bad command climate?
2. The documentary reveals that some interrogation techniques were approved strictly for use at Guantanamo Bay. Is it okay for the United States to use techniques at this prison that are not approved for use at other prisons, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are more visible to the public? Why or why not?

3. One of the MPs, who served at Bagram and Abu Ghraib, states that he was never trained on the Geneva Conventions or the standard field interrogation manual. Can the actions that took place in the prison be blamed solely on a lack of training? Why or why not?
4. The film shows several high-ranking generals and politicians visiting the detainee camps during the war. One of the guards claims that each of them toured his prison and knew what was going on. Do you believe this? Why or why not? Assuming he is correct in this claim, should these officials have stepped in and stopped the atrocities? Should they have been held accountable for failing to intervene?

Examples/Discussion

1. The film implies that President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and White House legal counsel exercised powers that allowed them to push the envelope and violate the Geneva Conventions. Do you agree with this interpretation? Did they violate the conventions? Do you think that the course of action taken was acceptable given the situation in the early days of the GWOT and subsequent progress of the War on Terror?
2. The documentary makes clear the differences between FBI and CIA interrogation techniques. The CIA used enhanced or “torture” techniques, and the FBI did not. Where do you fall on this continuum of beliefs? Why? Under what circumstances?
3. Captain Wood, the senior intelligence officer attached to Abu Ghraib, did nothing about the misconduct within her command. Do you believe that she knew the full range of what was happening? How would you have reacted to the misconduct?

The Truman Show

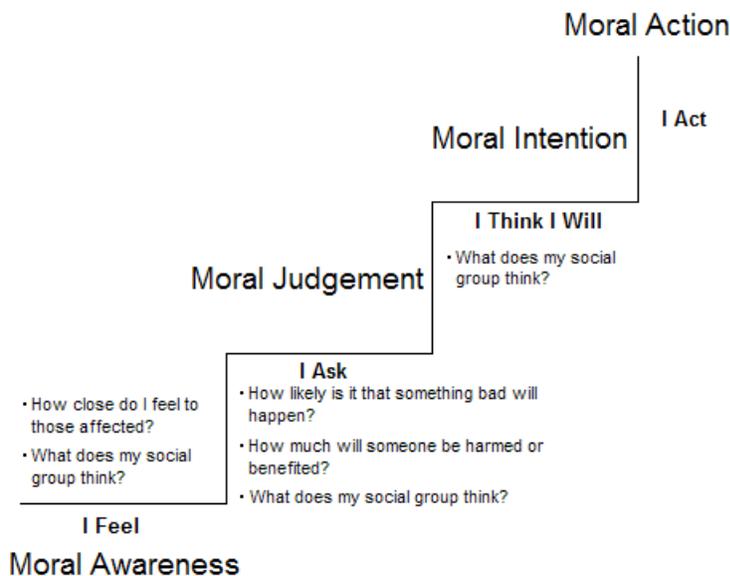
Ethical Decision-Making Movie Discussion

Movie Summary:

This movie follows the life of Truman Burbank. Truman believes he is living a normal life, but the truth is that he is the centerpiece of an enormous reality TV show. From birth, he has been followed by cameras, with a captivated audience watching his every move as he lives in a simulated town, peopled with actors. He has never left the town, but as he becomes suspicious about his life, his search for the truth intensifies. Truman, with the help of a former actress fired from the show, finds out what is really going on and frees himself from the simulated world.

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Check whether moral intensity factors are affecting you by asking:

1. Would my social group see a moral issue here?
2. How close do I feel to the people involved in this situation?

In the "I ask" step, weigh different choices to distinguish right from wrong, better from worse, and between competing tensions. To weigh those choices, ask the following:

1. If I take action, is that fair or unfair? Morally right or morally wrong?
2. What would someone I respect think is the best option?
3. If I take action, is that decision in line with my organization's or my society's rules and culture?

Ask whether moral intensity factors are affecting your judgment:

1. What would my social group think about my actions?
2. How much harm could come to someone if I take action? What if I don't take action?
3. How likely is it that this situation will turn out badly if I don't take action? What about if I do take action?

In the "I think I will" step, decide what to do or not to do, using the questions below:

1. What do I think I should do?
2. How much will what other people think about me influence my decision?
3. Do I intend to act on that decision?

In the "I act" step, carry out your intention, even if there is great opposition. These questions may be helpful:

1. Do I follow through on this intention?
2. What may prevent me from acting on my intention?
3. What may help me follow through on my intention?

This model can be used for everyday decisions, along with those that have more profound effects. This guide outlines the ethical dilemmas in *The Truman Show* and then presents some examples for discussion. You can use many of the dilemmas or examples to illustrate this ethical decision-making process.

Ethical Dilemmas:

1. On the orders of Christof, the producer of the Truman Show, Truman's best friend Marlon tells him he has never heard of Fiji and advises Truman not to go there. This is done in order to prevent Truman from trying to travel. Marlon has known Truman his whole life and has affection for him, but is acting a part in the show. He is withholding the truth. Is it morally acceptable for Marlon to mislead his friend in order to follow his boss' orders? What would you have done? (Use the model to work through the dilemma.)
2. Christof has created an entire simulated world for Truman to live in. He took away Truman's autonomy when he was an infant in order to produce the show. At the same time, Christof is careful to ensure that Truman comes to no harm. Do you believe that this is an immoral action? Does the fact that Truman has been in this controlled environment since birth change the situation? Would it be irresponsible of Christof to set him free?
3. The show's producers faked Truman's father's death, arranging the circumstances so that Truman believed it was his fault and was left with a fear of water, thus further preventing him from leaving the set of the show. Since the adult Truman might be ill-equipped to deal with the real world outside, does that make it okay for Christof to hide the truth?

Other Ethical Questions:

1. Should the various actors on the set have realized it is morally wrong to deceive Truman and made efforts to free him from the show? Why or why not? How might Christof have answered their concerns?
2. Marlon is the person closest to Truman, the one lifelong friend Truman trusts the most. He has also lied to Truman more than anybody else on the show. Is it really possible for him to be Truman's friend?
3. How often do we lie to friends and for what reasons?
4. Who do you believe is more morally to blame in how he treats Truman: Marlon or Christof? Why?
5. Is Lauren, the fired actress, right in her dogged pursuit to reveal the truth to Truman? Can you make the case that, "what he doesn't know can't hurt him"? Can you make a case that she places him at greater peril?

Examples/Discussion

1. What do you believe is the primary reason that nearly everyone involved agrees to the exploitation of Truman? Is it the pursuit of fame, money, self-interest, or a lack of moral courage?
2. Is lying to someone or deceiving others for your own benefit ever acceptable? Is lying to someone to protect them ever acceptable? Do people deserve to know the truth about their own lives even if they may be hurt by it?
3. Is the attainment of a God-like ability to protect or benefit others an acceptable reason for abandoning normal moral restraints? This is seen in *The Truman Show*, as well as around the world with various political leaders. Why does attainment of such power cause some to do horrific things?
4. What are the religious implications of *The Truman Show*?