Ethics Awareness Inventory - Gain New Insight Into Your Ethical Perspective

Your Ethical Perspective

You tend to base your ethical perspective on an individual’s duty or obligation to do what is morally right—principles that represent what rational persons ought morally to do. You believe that ethical conduct appeals to “conscience.” In judging whether a person’s actions are ethical, you look to the intent behind his/her actions, rather than focusing on results. In other words, to be considered ethical, you believe that we must choose how we act and what rules we are willing to follow. From your perspective, ethical principles must be: (a) appropriate under any circumstances (universalizable); (b) respectful of human dignity; and (c) committed to promoting individual freedom and autonomy. Human beings must never be treated simply as “means” to the accomplishment of some defined “end.” The end does not justify the means. For additional research: This category is most closely aligned in philosophy with a deontological theory (See Immanuel Kant and John Rawls).

Remember to review the BLENDED CATEGORIES section if your second highest score is within one or two points of your highest score.

Your Ethical Style

You believe that human beings have intrinsic value—we have a right to individual respect. Therefore, you cannot support social traditions and policies aimed at “the best interests of society as a whole” if any individual is denied the opportunities to which she/he is entitled as a human being. Your approach to ethics requires that, within legal and humane limits, people should be allowed to make their own choices. Acting in response to impulse, instinct, or rules worked out by others for us to obey does not constitute ethical conduct on our part. You believe that fostering personal growth takes precedence over achieving efficiency through organizational and social structures that tend to “dehumanize” ethical decision making. For this reason, you advocate policies intended to ensure equal respect and opportunities for all. Moral decisions must reflect the free choice of individuals if we ever expect to hold them personally responsible. You are guided by a desire to be in accord with established standards of right and wrong.

Frustrations You Face in Addressing Ethical Dilemmas

- What you determine to be the right choice may not appear to be the most beneficial choice for the organization you support. The right choice does not necessarily benefit the decision maker.

- You believe that cost-benefit analysis (weighing the cost versus benefit of a specific decision) is inappropriate for addressing issues with ethical considerations, even though this is the preferred decision making tool for many organizations. For example, some of the things that you hold most dear are not easily measured, e.g., right and wrong; good and evil; and the value of a human life.

- Your belief that we have a moral duty or obligation to do what is right leaves little room for compromise when ethical principles are being violated.

- You are frustrated to discover how various individuals define right and wrong, how conflicts are sometimes resolved in an organizational setting, and who resolves them.
The people you work with may argue that certain factions of society are not capable of acting in their own best interests. You consider this a faulty argument that was once used to deny equitable treatment to women and minorities.

Defending your ethical perspective may result in economic hardship, e.g., a lost promotion or termination.

**ARTICULATION—A Guide to Communicating Your Perspective**

Your increased Awareness will assist you as you move to the next step of the A³ process—Articulation. The words you use to explain your ethical position have a profound impact on your effectiveness. How well you are able to accomplish your tasks, build relationships and support your decisions will depend on your ability to express the basis for your position and to justify your decision making process.

Obligation-based perspectives are based on a sense of duty to do what is right. People who score highest on this perspective value an explanation for the rationale or intent behind a person’s actions. They want to see an indication that decisions are based on a commitment to basic universal principles of respect that govern a strong commitment to the best interests of all individuals involved.

Examples of Obligation-based comments:

- “We are clearly in violation of our professional standards.”
- “We have a duty to do the right thing for our clients.”

**Articulation of Your Perspective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Obligation** -- People are always an end in themselves, never a means to an end. The Golden Rule is non-negotiable. | ✓ Duty  
                   ✓ Intent  
                   ✓ Code of Conduct  
                   ✓ Ethical Principles  
                   ✓ Human Dignity  
                   ✓ Individual Freedom  
                   ✓ Autonomy |
| **Personal Attributes**: Consistent, Committed, Dependable, Respectful, “Straight arrow” | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Phrases</th>
<th>Individual Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We owe it to them…”</td>
<td>Committed to…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “We have a duty to…” | ✓ Principle-oriented decisions  
                   ✓ A moral compass  
                   ✓ Ethics training  
                   ✓ Equal opportunity for all  
                   ✓ Professional standards  
                   ✓ Respect for humane treatment  
                   ✓ Rules of order |
| “They deserve better…” | |
| “They have a right to…” | |