Moral Courage™ Seminar
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Junior Ethics Enrichment Experience!

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With generous feedback from the LDRS 311 instructors.

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Introduction

• This course is about Moral Courage™. By the end of this workshop, you should be able to:
  o Recognize circumstances requiring moral courage
  o Properly analyze the threats you face if you act
  o Expand your own capacities for courageous endurance
  o Enhance your capacities for practicing moral courage

You will also have a greater sense of the presence and lack of moral courage in our society.

Your Target for Today

• Review Ethical Fitness®
• Learn the elements of Moral Courage
• Learn how to assess Moral Courage
• Write and upload an essay about an Ethical Dilemma that required Moral Courage.
• Upload your essay to your E-Leadership Portfolio in Taskstream (see page 26).
Before delving into moral courage, it will be useful to review the main points about ethical decision making you learned in LDRS 111.

First you should recall that:

**Ethics**: The standards of conduct which indicate how one should behave based on moral duties and virtues rising from principles of right and wrong.

- There are **five core values**: honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, and compassion.

In LDRS 111, you also learned about five tests that are useful in determining whether or not an action is wrong. (Keep in mind that these tests are meant for quick, efficient, problem-solving purposes; some actions that fail these tests may be moral, and some actions that pass these tests may be immoral.)

1. The **legal test**: is the action legal? If not, it may be unethical.
2. The **professional standards test**: is the action consistent with the accepted standards of your profession?
3. The **gut feeling test**: how do you intuitively feel about the action? Does it feel wrong?
4. The **front-page test**: how would you feel if your action was published on the front page of a newspaper?
5. The **role model test**: would your role model perform the action?
You also learned the difference between *moral temptations* (right vs. wrong) and *ethical dilemmas* (right vs. right).

In LDRS 111 you were introduced to four different ethical dilemma paradigms: *truth vs loyalty, short-term vs long-term, individual vs community*, and *justice vs mercy*.

- **Truth vs Loyalty**: Contrasts telling the truth or being honest with the values responsibility or promise-keeping. “Telling the truth” most commonly means accurately reporting the facts, whereas loyalty focuses on allegiance to a friend, a group, or a set of ideas.
- **Short-term vs Long-term**: involves the immediate needs of the present conflicting with those of the future.
- **Individual vs Community**: pits the interests of the individual, standing all alone, against those of some larger group (to which the individual also often belongs). Or it could be about the interests of one person compared to another, or the interests of a small group compared to those of some larger group.
- **Justice vs. Mercy**: is a choice between going by the book and bending the rules. It involves choosing between fairness and equal treatment of everyone on the one hand, and compassion and allowing for exceptions on the other hand.
Decision Principles

In order to resolve dilemmas, you also learned three decision principles:

1. **Ends-based thinking** or consequentialism: consider the consequences of your action. The most common form of consequentialism states that one should do what produces the greatest good for the greatest number.

2. **Rule-based thinking** or deontology: an action is right only if it conforms to a universally applicable moral rule. The most common moral rule that is thought to be universally applicable is Kant’s categorical imperative: “act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

3. **Care-based thinking**: asks us to empathize with others and consider their needs. It is most famously expressed as the Golden Rule: “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

These three decision making principles are useful for resolving ethical dilemmas, which arise when two core values come into conflict. When this kind of situation occurs, one must decide between two right actions.

At the end of LDRS 111, you should have learned how to diagnose and resolve ethical dilemmas. Now, in LDRS 311 we will learn about the courage needed to implement your resolution.
**Review Exercise:** Your instructor will show you a video of an ethical dilemma. Watch the video and analyze the dilemma:

1. Whose dilemma was it?

2. Which of the core values was most at stake?

3. Which dilemma paradigm(s) best describe the dilemma?

4. What resolutions do the decision principles recommend?
Part Two: Elements of Moral Courage

**Morals:** values or principles which are concerned with what is good or right

**Courage:** quality of mind that enables one to face challenges and uncertainties. Courage is not good in and of itself, unlike the core values, but is for the sake of achieving some result. Courage is good when it helps one achieve good results (it takes courage to rescue the hostage), but it is bad when it is used to achieve bad results (it takes courage to take someone hostage).

**Moral Courage** is about not compromising one's character and core values; it is doing what one knows is right in the face of real loss. Moral courage is about action—i.e., acting in a way that corrects a moral problem in one’s community. It is the willing *endurance of significant danger for the sake of principle.*

- Courageous people, may place themselves in harm’s way in order to protect their valuables; *morally courageous* people will place themselves in harm’s way in order to protect their core values.

*Moral courage is readiness to expose oneself to suffering or inconvenience which does not affect the body. It arises from firmness of moral principle and is independent of the physical constitution.*

---

--Sir James Fitzjames, 1862
Exercise 1:

Small group discussion followed by large group discussion

Break up into several small groups. Each group will be assigned a different community to discuss. For your assigned community:

• discuss recent examples where you see evidence of moral courage in the respective community
• discuss recent examples which show evidence that moral courage is lacking
• think about what characteristics of the community contribute to its lack of moral courage
• brainstorm with your group about the characteristics of the morally courageous person(s) in your examples

Communities:

❖ The Citadel
❖ The Business World
❖ Medicine
❖ Sports
❖ Military
❖ Journalism
❖ Entertainment
❖ Religious
Moral Courage, like physical courage, varies from being barely noticeable to astonishingly brave.

In small groups discuss examples, from the perspective of your respective community, of morally courageous behaviors from Most Courageous to Least Courageous, and list them below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Courageous</th>
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Moral Courage, Ethical Dilemmas, and Moral Temptations

Even though ethical dilemmas are choices between two rights, the choices one faces often require moral courage.

Example: Moral Courage and an Ethical Dilemma

Consider a person living in a war torn region of the world who is considering fleeing as a refugee. Such a person might want to stay where they are because they love their culture, their country, and because staying will keep them close to their friends and family. Furthermore, if they leave, they will be living in a different culture, where they may have to speak a different language, and will be separated from many friends and family. If the person decides to leave, it may be because they believe that they will be able to pursue a better life, even if that means being separated from a community they know best.

The refugee has a dilemma. On the one hand, it is right to stay. On the other hand, it is right to leave. What dilemma paradigm(s) best describe the situation?

If the refugee decides to stay, will staying require moral courage? If the refugee decides to leave, will leaving require moral courage?
Example: Moral Courage and a Moral Temptation

As a cadet at Westpoint, Ian Fishback learned that he should never let his followers commit a dishonorable act. However, he had consistently witnessed serious abuses at Camp Mercury in Fallujah. Instead of ignoring these immoral actions, Captain Fishback consulted his chain of command, the Inspector General’s Office at Fort Bragg, and a variety of other government and political offices. When no one in any of these offices were willing to help, Captain Fishback provided information to Human Rights Watch about the abuse he had witnessed. Finally, in 2005, he wrote to Senator John McCain, who would join two other senators in drafting legislation that would give clear guidelines to what counts as acceptable and ethical treatment of prisoners.¹

Captain Ian Fishback knew that what he was witnessing was unethical and that he had a moral duty to end the abusive actions that had become too common at Camp Mercury. For Captain Fishback, it may have been tempting to ignore the abuses, but allowing unethical actions to continue would have been wrong.

Nevertheless, it took real moral courage to draw attention to the abuses at Camp Mercury.

The Elements of Moral Courage

Moral courage is about *doing* what one knows is right. It is fundamentally about supporting the **core values** of honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, and compassion. *Acting* to uphold such principles is an essential element of moral courage.

Of course, the morally courageous person would not be courageous if there were not any **danger** or risks threatening to harm the individual or the community. So, danger is also an essential element of moral courage.

Finally, the morally courageous person needs to be able to **endure** these dangers and must **trust** that what they are doing is right. This trust might be a trust in one’s experience, character, faith, intuition, or supportive context.

When these three elements intersect, moral courage emerges.
Values:

All cultures share the basic core values of honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, and compassion. However, different cultures may weigh these values differently. The morally courageous person is one who maintains such values and notices when one or more of these values is being violated. Thus, *morally courageous people base their actions on the core values.*

Danger:

“Courage is being scared to death and Saddling up anyway.”---John Wayne

One cannot be courageous without facing danger. The courageous person may feel fear and discomfort, but is able to overcome such feelings in the pursuit of some goal.

Courage can be physical when we face immediate threats to our bodies or to our lives. It can be psychological when we overcome phobias and anxieties; it is moral when we are defending moral principles, immoral when we defend immoral principles.

*It is possible to go too far, or not far enough in fear, pride, anger, pity, and pleasure and pain generally, and the excess and the deficiency are alike wrong; but to feel these emotions at the right times, for the right objects, towards the right persons, for the right motives, and in the right manner is the mean or the best good, which signifies virtue.*

Three Dangers of Moral Courage:

- **Ambiguity**: when one is uncertain, confused, or has conflicting ideas about whether one should act
- **Exposure**: when we take a stand, we expose ourselves to others
- **Personal Loss**: morally courageous actions may result in a damaged reputation, a loss of income and employment, etc...

Endurance:

What gives us the capacity to endure?

How do we overcome the threats of ambiguity, exposure, and personal loss?

Do we trust our judgment that what we are doing is right?

Do we trust that in the long run things will work out?

We need trust in order to endure the dangers associated with moral courage.
Typically, there are five reasons we trust:

- Experience: we trust our past experience and rely on it when faced with a challenge
- Character: we trust who we are and the values that we have
- Faith: we trust in a higher authority or an objective principle
- Intuition: we trust our gut feelings and our conscience
- Supportive Context: we trust that others will understand and support our actions

**Consider this quote from Rosa Parks:**

“I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.”

What enabled Rosa Parks to endure the dangers she faced?
Summary of the Three Elements of Moral Courage:

Core Values
   Honesty
   Fairness
   Responsibility
   Respect
   Compassion

Danger: Three Risks
   Ambiguity: confusion, uncertainty, conflicting ideas
   Exposure: prominence, being out in front, taking the lead
   Loss: of wealth, reputation, or position

Endurance: Five Reasons to Trust
   Experience
   Character
   Faith
   Intuition
   Supportive Context

A morally courageous person must be able to Penetrate the "mists of confusion, complexity, and uncertainty; accept the prominence and public exposure that often accompanies courageous action; and willingly risk the loss of prosperity or reputation that this action may bring.

---Kidder (2005, p. 137)
We’ve seen how moral courage arises from the intersection of values, dangers, and endurance. Still, people often fail to act morally courageous. This is often because various factors inhibit our ability to be morally courageous. Below we consider some of the more common inhibitors to moral courage.

Inhibitors to Moral Courage
(derived from Kidder 2005, pp. 211-12)

1. **Overconfident cultures** may cut off discussion, tolerate unethical acts, or refuse to hear new ideas and question their own positions.
   - Overconfident cultures inhibit moral courage by preventing individuals from analyzing their own actions and from listening to criticism. Would-be morally courageous individuals are prevented from speaking up in overconfident cultures because they believe that no one will hear them or care.

2. **Compromises** engendered by a desire to be accepted, liked, promoted, or as a way of avoiding difficult but right demands.
   - For example, politicians often need to compromise certain principles in order to pass laws, get elected, and make genuine progress on important issues. However, the pressure to compromise can be so great that the politician risks losing the principles that matter most to them.

3. **Foolhardiness** occurs when we forge ahead without properly assessing the risks.
   - Sometimes competition and poor planning lead us to take extraordinary risks that usually lead to disaster.

4. **Timidity** may urge us to flee from situations demanding bold forwardness. We may not want to endure the discomfort that moral courage requires.
   - Timidity sometimes arises from a weakness of the will—we know what we should do, but we are unable to overcome the discomfort associated with doing what is right.

5. **Raw courage** that ignores the principled heart of moral courage, substituting instead a misplaced sense of honor or a merely physical bravery.
• Example: a misplaced sense of honor may lead a person to seek revenge or start a fight. *Moral courage* emphasizes the courage to defend *moral principles* and not simply the courage to defend any principle.

6. **Tepid ethics**, lacking sufficient intensity and breadth to rise above the merely dutiful and tolerant, and keeping one from the resounding vision and clarity that often characterize true moral courage.
   • Tepid ethics occurs when a person has a good basic sense of ethics but does not recognize what ethics demands in certain situations.

7. **Over-reflection** may lead us to rationalize a way out of an expression of moral courage.

8. **Bystander apathy** arises when we think that because others are present, and they are not acting, we do not need to act.

9. **Groupthink** that defends a bad collective decision that no one, in the group, acting alone, would have countenanced.
   • See for example the Asch Conformity experiment where subjects stop believing their own perception and accept whatever the group “thinks.”

10. **Normalized deviancy**, leading us to redefine some wrong behaviors as acceptable.
    • Example: within a company certain actions (e.g., sexist jokes) can become so common that they are no longer seen as bad—formerly deviant behavior becomes accepted as normal.

11. **Excessive or misapplied altruism** occurs when generosity is manipulative or in cases of well-intentioned meddling.
    • Manipulative altruism occurs when someone makes us an offer that we cannot refuse, but that we should refuse. Well-intentioned meddling occurs when we reward people for things they did not achieve.

12. **Cultural differences** may persuade one that one’s moral boundaries need not extend to include people who are different from me or who are not part of my social group/institution.
    • Example: people often find it easier to help someone who is from the same group (socio-economic class, school, neighborhood) than it is to help someone who is different (e.g., a homeless person or a foreigner).
Moral Courage: A Six-Point Assessment

1. Assess the situation?
   - Who is the actor?
2. What key value is most at stake?
   - Honesty, Fairness, Responsibility, Respect, Compassion
3. What is the highest right?
   - Analysis
     - Truth vs Loyalty
     - Justice vs Mercy
     - Short-term vs Long-term
     - Individual vs Community
   - Resolution
     - Ends-based thinking
     - Rules-based thinking
     - Care-based thinking
4. What dangers face the actor?
   - Fear of ambiguity
   - Fear of public exposure
   - Fear of personal loss
5. What trusts allow the actor to endure?
   - Experience | Character | Faith | Intuition | Supportive context
6. What inhibitors prevent the actor from enduring?
   - Overconfident culture | Compromises | Foolhardiness | Timidity | Raw courage | Tepid ethics | Over reflection | Bystander apathy | Groupthink | Normalized deviancy | Altruism | Cultural differences
Videos: *I Am Moral Courage*

Your instructor will show you two videos from the Moral Courage channel on Youtube. As you watch the films respond to the questions below.

**Video 1:**

1. Who is the actor? What makes him/her morally courageous?

2. What values are at stake?

3. What is the highest right? (Analyze and resolve the dilemma)

4. What dangers/risks are present in the situation?
5. What trusts does the agent have that help him/her endure?

6. What are some inhibitors that exist in the community that make positive change difficult? Circle those that apply:
   - Overconfident culture
   - Compromises
   - Foolhardiness
   - Timidity
   - Raw courage
   - Tepid ethics
   - Over reflection
   - Bystander apathy
   - Groupthink
   - Normalized deviancy
   - Altruism
   - Cultural differences

   • How might one reduce the influence of these inhibitors?
Video 2:

1. Who is the actor? What makes him/her morally courageous?

2. What values are at stake?

3. What is the highest right? (Analyze and resolve the dilemma)

4. What dangers/risks are present in the situation?
5. What trusts does the agent have that help him/her endure?

6. What are some inhibitors that exist in the community that make positive change difficult? Circle those that apply:
   Overconfident culture | Compromises | Foolhardiness | Timidity | Raw courage | Tepid ethics | Over reflection | Bystander apathy | Groupthink | Normalized deviancy | Altruism | Cultural differences
   • How might one reduce the influence of these inhibitors?
Your Turn:

Individually come up with an ethical dilemma that you experienced which required moral courage. Then get into small groups to discuss your dilemma. Finally each group should choose a dilemma to present to the class. Use the six-point assessment to analyze your dilemma:

1. Who is the actor? What makes him/her morally courageous?

2. What values are at stake?

3. What is the highest right? (Analyze and resolve the dilemma)

4. What dangers/risks are present in the situation?
5. What trusts does the agent have that help him/her endure?

6. What are some inhibitors that exist in the community that make positive change difficult? Circle those that apply:
   Overconfident culture | Compromises | Foolhardiness | Timidity | Raw courage | Tepid ethics | Over reflection | Bystander apathy | Groupthink | Normalized deviancy | Altruism | Cultural differences
   • How might one reduce the influence of these inhibitors?
Part Four: E-Leadership Portfolio

Leadership 311: Junior Ethics Enrichment Experience

Ethical Reasoning Essay

To be uploaded in your E-Leadership Portfolio in TaskStream

Note: When describing your scenario, please be aware that confidentiality is not protected. As appropriate, use anonymous names, dates, or places when you feel that the information should not be made public.

Directions: Write an essay to include the six major parts listed below. It should be of adequate length and scope to address all items below and conform to high standards of academic writing.

1. Describe an ethical dilemma that calls for moral courage. (Make sure that you have a right vs right scenario that also requires moral courage.)
   - Who is the actor? | Why does this scenario require moral courage?
2. What key value is most at stake?
   - Honesty | Fairness | Responsibility | Respect | Compassion
3. What is the highest right?
   - Categorize your dilemma in terms of the following dilemma paradigms: Truth vs. Loyalty | Justice vs. Mercy | Short-term vs. Long-term | Individual vs. Community
   - Use the decision principles to derive resolutions to the dilemma: Ends-based thinking | Rules-based thinking | Care-based thinking
4. What dangers face the actor?
   - Fear of ambiguity | Fear of public exposure | Fear of personal loss
5. What trusts allow the actor to endure?
   - Experience | Character | Faith | Intuition | Supportive context
6. What inhibitors prevent the actor from enduring?
   - Overconfident culture | Compromises | Foolhardiness | Timidity | Raw courage | Tepid ethics | Over reflection | Bystander apathy | Groupthink | Normalized deviancy | Altruism | Cultural differences
   - How might one go about reducing the influence of these inhibitors?
The Citadel’s Core Values: Honor, Duty, and Respect

Definitions of Ethical Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>A regular pattern of thought and action, especially with respect to commitments in matters affecting the happiness of others and oneself and especially in relation to moral choices</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Principles</td>
<td>A framework to view ethical dilemma resolution that includes ends-based, care-based, and rule-based thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Dilemma</td>
<td>A situation where there is a conflict between values and a choice of action that needs to be decided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Dilemma</td>
<td>A framework for examining ethical dilemmas that includes truth versus loyalty, short-term versus long-term, justice versus mercy, and individual versus community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Paradigms</td>
<td>Values that are translated into standards of conduct such as The Citadel’s Honor Code — cadets do not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Principles</td>
<td>The belief that values are relative in the sense that no individual or cultural value is best</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>The standards of conduct which indicate how one should behave based on moral duties and virtues rising from principles of right and wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>That which is good or right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Values</td>
<td>The basic building blocks of ethical decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Basic beliefs that guide an individual’s attitudes, thoughts, and behavior</td>
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Ethical Dilemma vs. Moral Temptation

“The really tough choices . . . don’t center on right versus wrong. They involve right versus right. They are genuine dilemmas precisely because each side is firmly rooted in one of our basic, core values” (Kidder, 2009, p. 3). Thus, moral temptations involve a choice between right versus wrong, whereas ethical dilemmas involve a choice between right versus right.

Notes