

Conflicting values
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When you have a moral dilemma in the workplace, what do you do? Do you stand up for what you believe? Do you go against your moral fiber? Do you question the ethics of your superiors? This question has plagued many throughout time. Scott (2002) explains how Aristotle believed, “ a morally virtuous action requires an individual to be able to choose how to respond to his or her own thoughts and feelings” (para. 8). As human beings, we will face uncomfortable situations, and we will decide whether to be courageous and follow our hearts or do nothing. Kidder et al. (2005) suggests, “ The ultimate goal of morally courageous behavior is to put ethical principles into action and protect ethical values perceived to be at risk” (as cited in Murray, 2010, para. 5).

Courage in the workplace might sound rather strange. However, when one has to face adversity when everyone is going along with the crowd it will be hard. When you enter a situation, the workplace, where there are many different people coming together from many different backgrounds, people will have different values. Kim (2012) states that, “ it is important to note that individuals who are similar in age, gender and race can and do differ in their values, attitudes and personalities” (para. 4). Understanding this, individuals that take a moral stand, could be ostracized from their coworkers or employers. Everyone’s moral compass is different, so quite possibly you could be taking a stand alone. This will take courage. Do not give in to your doubts. Stand up for what you believe. “ Moral courage” (Murray, 2010) is a characteristic that rates high with not only employers but in society itself.

Murray’s (2010) study on Moral Courage goes on to say the following:

Moral courage is seen in individuals who, when they uncover an ethical dilemma, explore a course of action based on their ethical values, and follow through with a decision as to the right course of action regardless of the possible consequences this course of action might present. (para. 11)

There are ways to voice your concerns. The Human Resource department is an integral part of an organization that is there to make sure the core values of the company are upheld. “ The number of incidents of employees reporting ethical misconducts has grown in the past decade,” (Mathis & Jackson, 2008, p. 22). Human Resources can advise employees on “ ethical situations”. Often organizations will provide a way to report issues confidentially (Mathis & Jackson, 2008, p. 23).

Companies that have a Code of Conduct implemented and enforced have fewer ethical issues. As Dr. Pace (2006) explains, “ leaders see the benefit of having their ethical policies formalized. Codes of conduct tell employees what is expected of them in order to limit the responsibility, or liability, of the company should an employee violate the code” (p. 28). Murray (2010) believes “ professional organizations need to articulate, encourage adherence to, and act on shared values as they provide an environment in which moral behaviors are welcomed and expected” (para. 14).

The distinction needs to be made between protocol and policy. Protocol in your workplace might not be the organization’s policy. When protocol does not meet up with your personal values, check the company’s handbook for guidelines on its policy. If the policy and the protocol do not add up, then you have a case to go to human resources. On the other hand, if the protocol

matches with what is in the company's handbook, and the work you are doing does not

go along with your values, you should possibly consider a different job. HR is there for you to voice your complaint to, however, if it is not a valid complaint, there will be no solution. This reiterates the point that people who come from different backgrounds will have differing values and morals.

Knowing that everyone is an individual, Kim (2012) discusses how necessary it is for businesses to teach tolerance and the importance of diversity. The more diverse the environment the higher the propensity that conflict will emerge. In conclusion, ethics are teachable. Kidder (2005) shows "most scholars who study ethics agree with Aristotle that everyone, regardless of profession, can benefit from education and training in the area of moral courage" (as cited in Murray, 2010, para. 11). Companies that provide a welcoming environment to "moral courage," which provide ethics training, and "encourage adherence" to the company's policy will thrive in today's diverse world (Murray, 2010, para. 3).

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