

The controversial issue of neurohacking

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Imagine if it were 2032 and life as we once knew it has progressively changed in many areas. Neurohacking, a process where the brain is altered to improve itself is being used in 1 out of 5 individuals. This is how the future could possibly turn into if the process of neurohacking becomes morally acceptable. However, at this moment in time neurohacking is only written of. It is also referred to as DIY neurohacking. Customers nowadays have hopes of zapping their brains with a small electrical current that can help improve everything from memory to attention, but the long-term effects of neurostimulation are still unidentified. This could potentially become a disaster and can even negatively influence students who are not capable of boosting their brain capability. These and many more reasons are why neurohacking has become classified as an ethical issue. Ethics addresses some of the fundamental questions of human life such as how people should live. And what people should do in particular situations? Through the past 30 years, the study of ethical issues has become a public concern, and has sometimes demanded public attention. People who disagree over ethical issues can try to ignore others' differences and have the desire to overpower their opponents. Those who disagree can try to increase their understanding and possibly reach a compromise or settlement through open discussion and research to acknowledge the dilemma. Now, that we have gotten the gist of what neurohacking is and what an ethical issue is, we will delve deeper into this theory looking into its history, how it is an ethical issue, and the problems that arise with it.

Neurohacking was first founded in late 2011, referred to as the “do-it-yourself” (DIY) brain stimulation movement where people began building

stimulation devices and applying low levels of electricity to their heads for self-improvement purposes. Additionally, since the late 1990s, scientists, ethicists, and legal scholars have debated the issue of neuroenhancement – the improvement of healthy people’s cognitive functioning on the neural level, for example by psychopharmacological means (Whitehouse et al., 1997; Farah et al., 2004). Neuroenhancement was used through study drugs such as amphetamine as early as the 1930s. The topic of enhancing parts of your brain has been around for quite a long time, however permanent alteration has not progressed as much. As we develop as a society, the need for improvement arises whether in our thinking or more specifically in our brain capacity. That is the reason behind neuroenhancement and now neurohacking and possibly in the future genetically modified individuals. Neuroenhancement may solve problems that come about as we evolve and it may increase our problem-solving and cognitive capability as well as increase our emotional resilience so that we remain unalarmed by a constant flow of news coming in showing the enormous challenges we face all around the world. The world gets more complex from day to day, the problems are bigger, and harder, which means the people doing the problem-solving have to have capabilities that are aligned with the magnitude of problems.

While there has been considerable debate about the fit between moral theory and moral reasoning in everyday life, the way in which moral problems are defined has not been questioned as much. There are usually three conditions that must be present for a situation to be considered an ethical dilemma. The three conditions consist of first, situations when an individual, must make a decision about which course of action is best. The

second condition for an ethical dilemma is that there must be different courses of action to choose from and the third, in an ethical dilemma is that no matter what course of action is taken, some ethical principle is compromised. Also saying that there is no perfect solution. In determining what constitutes an ethical dilemma, it is essential to make note the difference between ethics, values, and morals. Ethics rely on logical and rational criteria to reach a decision (Congress, 1999; Dolgoff, Loewenberg, & Harrington, 2009; Reamer, 1995; Robison & Reeser, 2002).

Neuroenhancement may seem like a wonderful idea at first, although when looked at morally certain issues may arise. Moral values can be defined as relative values that protect life and are respectful of the dual life value of self and others. While, a person whose morality is reflected in his willingness to do the right thing – even if it is hard or dangerous – is ethical. Ethics are moral values in action. Being ethical is an imperative trait because morality protects life and is respectful of others, especially when considering neuroenhancement in the form of neurohacking. To some interfering with someone's brain may seem normal because people alter many different parts of the body already, however this topic has been noted as an ethical issue. Situations that are uncomfortable but that don't require a choice, are not ethical dilemmas. Probably the most concerning effect of neuroenhancement is the potential for dependency. The psychological and physiological implications of this type of dependence are not unlike those experienced by psychoactive drug users, since essentially the same brain regions are subject to change. However the key question is this is how vastly can we alter our cognitive and mental functioning without irreversibly

harming ourselves ? The idea of altering the brain in a particular region will possibly match to changes in function of connected regions. With neuroenhancement, we still do not know whether child development, including the ability to define oneself and cope with challenges on their own, is affected. Which raises the question of whether improving one's cognitive function is worth the negative physical and mental problems.

In conclusion this ethical situation has risen in society and there has not been a stable compromise. It appears that when someone alters their cognitive functions or even enhances their brain capabilities, considering values and morals are involved. Ethical situations will always be a part of life's experience. At some point in our lifetime we may experience the issue. When faced with these difficult dilemmas one must take into consideration the greater good for all. Knowing how to best resolve difficult moral and ethical dilemmas is never easy. Without doubt, neuroenhancement comes in a tempting package. The idea of potentially amplifying human cognitive abilities seems to vastly increase the rate at which our society is advancing. However, neuroenhancement will not be equally accessible for all components of society, the side effects of altering our brains are largely unidentified, and the potential for addiction is high. At the moment, the negative socio-economic and physiological consequences of neuroenhancement seem to outweigh the prospect of having stronger minds. Humans will always retain the capacity to change their brains and there is no stimulation that is really needed to achieve this.