

Jolted awake by the ringing of his cell phone, Matt glances at his alarm clock as he picks up the receiver. He wonders who could be calling at 5 a.m.

“Hey, Matt! Get up and grab



your skis. A foot of snow fell in the mountains last night. The skiing will be awesome!”

As Matt listens to Josh, his best friend and ski buddy, he thinks, “There’s nothing urgent going on at work today. Besides, I’ve been working really hard. Computer Solutions owes me some time off.”

“C’mon, Matt. Just call in sick. No one will know,” Josh says. “It’s April, and the ski season’s almost over. There won’t be many more days like today.”

Josh’s logic sways Matt, and he calls in from the base of the mountain to say he is sick. Then, the two friends spend the day skiing the deep powder in the glades and racing down double-diamond runs.

The next morning, Matt feels energized and ready to work. When he gets to his office at the computer manufacturing company, where he works as a technician, Moshe stops by

to ask how he’s feeling.

Then Moshe says,

“We really missed you yesterday. Remember that order from Ablex for 30 computers? Myron Kaufman called to say he needed them sent immediately. So Ky and I had to assemble and package all 30 computers ourselves. It took us until 7 o’clock last night. We

just made the last FedEx™ pickup.”

Matt feels a twinge of guilt. Then he thinks, “Well, they got the shipment out on time. No harm done.”

What's Inside

Here, you will learn to

- ◆ listen to your inner voice
- ◆ make the right decision
- ◆ maintain honesty at work

Listen to Your Inner Voice

Matt's decision to call in sick was a poor one. His action was unethical, and if his supervisor learns that he lied, his behavior will signal that he can't be trusted.

We learn what is right and wrong at a young age by watching and listening to our family, religious leaders, teachers, and other adults. From their words and actions, they teach us to work hard, treat other people fairly and kindly, and stand by our word. They teach the importance of honesty and getting work done on time.



“Everything I ever really needed to know I learned in kindergarten,” claims best-selling author Robert Fulghum. He means that we learn as youth a set of values that will guide our behavior for many years—at home, at work, everywhere. This set of moral values is called ethics.

Here are some of the behaviors Fulghum mentions, which are taught by kindergarten teachers nationwide. Can you see how they apply not only to young children but also to adults in work situations?

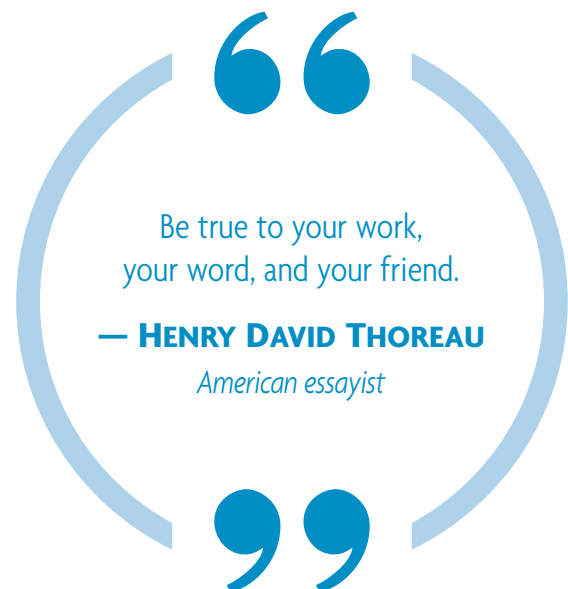
- ◆ Share everything.
- ◆ Play fair.
- ◆ Don't hit people.
- ◆ Put things back where you found them.
- ◆ Clean up your own mess.
- ◆ Don't take things that aren't yours.
- ◆ Say you're sorry when you hurt someone.

As you grow older, all the lessons you have learned about right and wrong become your conscience, or inner voice. If you listen to it, and pay attention to your gut feelings, nine times out of ten you will know the right thing to do.

Good ethics are reflected in values such as these:

- ◆ Honesty
- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Dependability
- ◆ Hard work
- ◆ Sincerity
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Caring
- ◆ Punctuality
- ◆ Fairness
- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Kindness
- ◆ Loyalty

Employees who display these values are chosen for important projects and assignments, since their supervisors trust their work ethics and know they will give their best effort.



But That's Too Simple...

You're right. The values you learn as a child form the foundation for your decisions about how to act at work, but additional ethical guidelines also must direct your actions in the workplace. These rules cover activities that are specific to your job, such as conflicts of interest, giving and receiving gifts, documenting time worked, confidentiality, being accountable for your actions, personal use of the Internet and email, and others. You'll face ethical questions every day in your job, no matter if you are just starting out or are a senior-level manager.

Ethical guidelines exist for different industries, professions, and companies. For example:

- ◆ The American Counseling Association has a Code of Conduct for mental health counselors.
- ◆ The American Chemical Society publishes the Chemist's Code of Conduct.
- ◆ The Hippocratic Oath and the American Medical Association's Code of ethics guide the conduct of medical professionals.
- ◆ Law enforcement officials, university professors, and researchers also must abide by codes of conduct for their professions.



Most major corporations have codes of conduct. If your company has one, read it thoroughly and follow it to the letter.

Your organization may also offer ethical training, where you will be taught the behaviors required by your company. The company may have an ethics officer, who can provide guidance, or an ethics hotline, where experienced staff help employees resolve ethical questions.

Right or Wrong?

Behaviors that are clearly right

- Filling in time sheets truthfully
- Listing only work expenses on expense reports
- Getting to work on time and giving a full day's effort
- Using company supplies for work only
- Taking only authorized time off, and not abusing sick-day policies

Actions that are clearly wrong

- Charging for time you haven't worked
- Charging for nonwork-related activities
- Arriving late, leaving early, taking long lunches, socializing excessively during work time
- Taking company supplies for personal use
- Calling in sick when you are healthy

What About Questions Not Covered by the Codes?

Making the right choice is easy when one behavior is clearly right and one behavior is clearly wrong. But sometimes, you will have to make a decision between two behaviors that you consider to be right. For example, suppose you see a coworker, who is a friend of yours, take money from the cash register and put it in her pocket. She notices you looking and asks you to not say anything, since she can't afford to lose her job. You must decide between supporting a friend and telling the truth, both of which are positive values. Or, suppose a coworker tells you to install defective screws into a product because the client needs the product immediately and there's no time to get replacement screws. Do you get the product to the customer on time, or do you insist on quality?



Here is a framework that may help you resolve such ethical dilemmas:

- Step 1:** Listen to your conscience. Do you have a gut feeling about the situation?
- Step 2:** Pay attention to the phrases you speak or hear. Comments such as “Just this once,” “Let’s not tell anyone,” and “Just don’t tell me about it. I’d rather not know” are indications of unethical conduct.
- Step 3:** Determine exactly what the issue is, then check your organization’s and profession’s ethical codes of conduct. Is the issue addressed?
- Step 4:** Think how you would feel if your actions were discussed on social media. Would you be pleased or ashamed? Ethicists have called this the CNN or *New York Times* test. More simply, would your actions make your family proud?
- Step 5:** List alternative actions and their possible consequences. How might your actions affect you, the other parties, your company? How would they reflect on you?
- Step 6:** If none of these actions lead to an answer, discuss the problem with your supervisor or your company’s ethics officer. These people can steer you down the ethical path.

“
Make yourself an honest man,
and then you may be sure there
is one less rascal in the world.

— **THOMAS CARLYLE**
Essayist and Historian

ACTIVITY 3.1

NAME _____

Thinking It Through

Read each of the following situations, then answer the questions to indicate the action you would take. For each situation, think of possible positive and negative consequences for the various actions.

1. Your volleyball team will conduct a raffle to make money for team T-shirts. You were supposed to buy a roll of tickets for the team to use for the raffle, but you were busy with work and didn't have time. Several rolls of tickets like you need have been on the supply shelves at work for so long that they've accumulated a thick layer of dust.

Would you take the tickets for your volleyball team to use? Why or why not? _____

What other action could you take? _____

2. Your supervisor asked you to calculate your department's productivity from figures he provided. Later, when you see a copy of his report, you realize that he changed the numbers in a way that makes the department look more productive.

Would you report the action to the Ethics Office? Why or why not? _____

What other action could you take? _____

3. Your mother, who plans to visit you, doesn't want to take a taxi from the airport to your apartment. You're scheduled to work, and you've used up your personal days. No one else is around to pick your mother up.

Would you take a sick day? Why or why not? _____

What other action could you take? _____

4. Your roommate asks you to print out his research paper with your computer at work because his printer is not working. He gives you the paper for the printer.

Would you do it? Why or why not? _____

What other action could you take? _____

Make the Right Decision

Your employer will expect you to draw a solid ethical line and not cross it. Your customers and clients will expect you to act ethically. But you should also choose to act ethically for yourself. When you act unethically, you risk destroying relationships you've worked hard to build, harm your chances to succeed in the workplace, and, perhaps most damaging, lose self-respect and dignity—two personal values that are hard to earn back.

Show Integrity

Integrity means doing the right thing despite pressure to do otherwise. Following these guidelines will help you demonstrate integrity.

You will show integrity when you:

- ◆ Tell the truth.
- ◆ Follow company rules and industry codes of ethics at all times.
- ◆ Report your time and work accurately.
- ◆ Keep your word.
- ◆ Respect coworkers, supervisors, and customers.
- ◆ Take responsibility for your mistakes.



You will damage your integrity if you:

- ◆ Withhold information that your supervisor, coworkers, or customers need.
- ◆ Steal company resources.
- ◆ Falsify documents or reports.
- ◆ Misrepresent your time.
- ◆ Intimidate others at work.
- ◆ Take credit for coworkers' ideas or work.
- ◆ Lie.
- ◆ Make promises you know you can't keep.
- ◆ Disclose confidential information about customers, coworkers, or your company.

Employees act with integrity when they stand up for what they believe, even though their actions make them less popular or less successful. For example, they don't spend company time chatting with friends

on the phone. And even though they want to make a sale, they tell their customer that the product he or she wants will be superseded by a better version in a few months.

? Did you know?

Ninety percent of American workers expect their companies to do what is right, not just what is profitable. Seventy-nine percent say that their organization's concern for ethics is an important reason they continue to work there.

Source: 2000 National Business Ethics Survey of 1,500 randomly selected American workers

Resist Pressure to Act Unethically

Employees act unethically for many different reasons. They may feel pressure from supervisors or coworkers to increase productivity, speed, or sales. They may feel overworked or stressed about not performing well enough. To make themselves look better, they may cut corners on quality, encourage customers to purchase more expensive services than they need, or fudge results of studies. Some employees act unethically due to greed, competitiveness, laziness, peer pressure, or fear of the consequences of telling the truth.

Take Jesse, for example. Jesse always locks the company car when he gets out to deliver supplies. But yesterday afternoon, his mind wasn't on work, and he forgot to lock the door. Later, as he dropped off the car, he realized that the company cell phone, usually resting in the cupholder, had been stolen. He's afraid he'll get fired

if he reports the loss, so he doesn't say anything. What would you do if you were Jesse?

Do you remember Matt in the story at the beginning of this workshop? When Matt lied about being sick, he was reacting to peer pressure. But something else also influenced his decision. Matt believed that his company owed him something for all the hard work he'd been doing.

This attitude, which has been called an “entitlement mentality,” is sure to annoy employers. At work, you are expected to give your best effort at all times. Hard work is not considered a bargaining chip for time off.

Of 1,324 workers recently surveyed, 48 percent reported engaging in at least one unethical or illegal act in the previous 12 months. The chart on the next page shows the behaviors most frequently reported.

If you are ever tempted to act unethically, resist the temptation! Your unethical conduct will make you feel bad about yourself. It can also have other far-reaching results. Here are just a few effects.

What can you add to the list?

- ◆ Workers who engage in unethical conduct often lose credibility and sometimes lose their jobs.
- ◆ Their coworkers become angry with them for not pulling their weight, and teamwork,

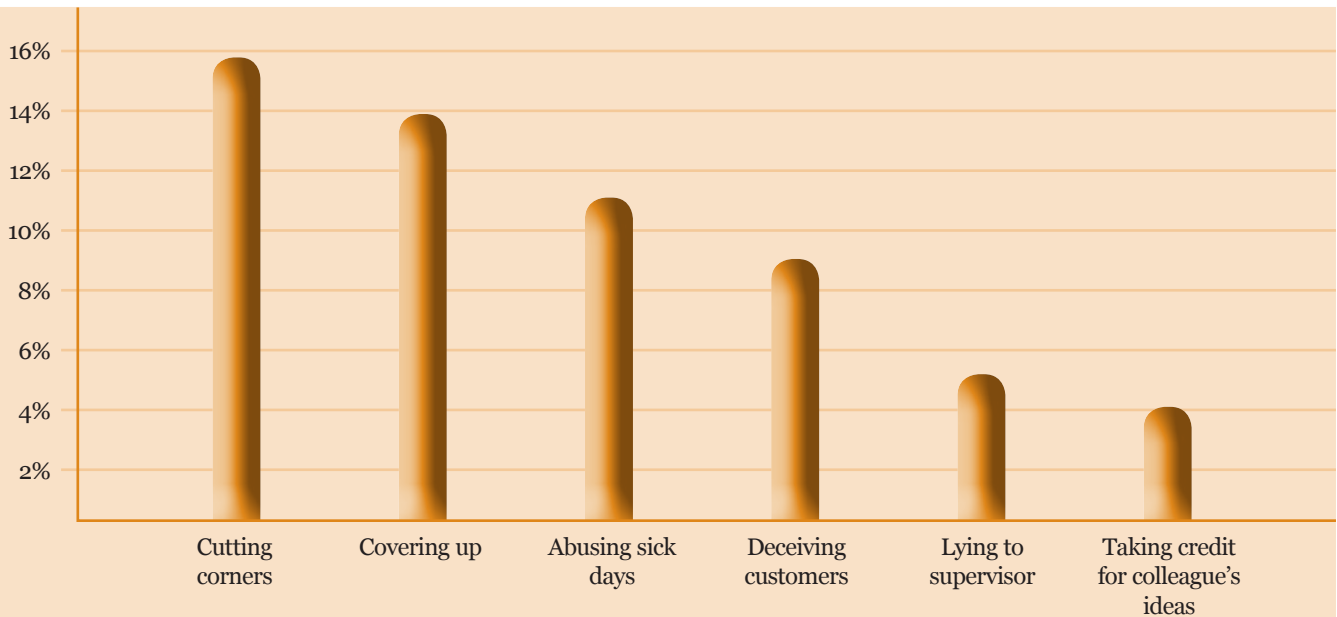
- productivity, and creativity suffer.
- ◆ The company experiences decreased profit and lower customer satisfaction.
- ◆ Everyone's stress increases, quality decreases, and morale plummets.



? Did you know?

One fourth of adults believe they have to lie and cheat to get ahead (U.S. News poll). Three fourths of college students confess to cheating at least once (Research by the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University).

Unethical Behaviors in Which Workers Engaged



Source: Survey of 1,324 workers by the Ethics Officer Association and the American Society of Chartered Life Underwriters and Chartered Financial Consultants

ACTIVITY 3.2

NAME _____

Being Honest with Yourself

Think of a time when you acted unethically at work, school, or home. Then, honestly answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper to keep your responses confidential.

1. What did you do that was unethical? _____

2. What prompted you to act in an unethical way? _____

3. Did your actions negatively affect anyone else? If so, how? _____

4. If your actions were found out, how would you be affected? _____

5. If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently? _____

Stop, Thief!

Employee theft cost U.S. retailers approximately \$50 million in 2017, according to *Time* magazine. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce indicates employee



theft contributes to one third of all business failures.

When you think of employee theft, you probably picture workers stealing supplies, but theft has many other forms as well, including the

electronic copying of company files. For example, employees steal from their companies when they inflate costs on expense reports or mail personal packages on the company account. They also commit theft when they steal time, which often takes these forms:

- ◆ Charging the company for a 40-hour week despite being 15 minutes late two days and taking long lunch hours.
- ◆ Making personal calls at work.
- ◆ Misusing sick days.
- ◆ Running errands during company time.
- ◆ Playing computer games or shopping on the Internet at work.

ACTIVITY 3.3

NAME _____

How Much Does It Cost?

You may think that taking a few Post-It Notes™ for personal use or arriving to work a few minutes late doesn't matter. Complete the calculations below to see how much employee theft costs a fictitious company of 30 employees over the course of one week.

Three workers each take home two packs of Post-It Notes™ at a cost of \$1.25 per pack _____

Three workers arrive at work 15 minutes late, at a cost of \$22/hour _____

Four workers take an extra half-hour for lunch, at a cost of \$19/hour _____

Three employees play computer games for a total of 4 hours each, at a cost of \$20/hour _____

One worker makes 300 personal copies on the company photocopier, at a cost of \$.05/copy _____

Three workers call in sick for one 8-hour day when they are healthy, at a cost of \$21/hour _____

Ten workers send three personal emails that take an average of two minutes each, at a cost of \$18/hour _____

Add up the totals to see how much these unethical activities cost the company over the course of a week _____

\$750, \$16.50, \$38.00, \$240.00, \$15.00, \$504.00, \$18.00, \$839.00



GETTING CONNECTED

Discover examples of poor ethics at work by logging on to:

<https://myqss.link/Poor-Ethics-Examples>

You can learn more about work ethics at:

<https://myqss.link/Strong-Work-Ethics>

WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

- Ethics are the set of values that help people determine right from wrong.
- If you listen to your conscience and pay attention to your gut feelings, you will usually know the right thing to do.
- If your organization has a code of ethics, follow it exactly.
- Base your actions on integrity and honesty. Resist pressure to stray from the right course.
- Employees who act unethically risk losing self-respect, credibility, and their jobs.