**Topic 5.1 Ethics in Business: Starter Activity**



**Please answer the following questions. Turn over to the page and total up your ‘Care’ and ‘Justice’ scores, which will identify your ethical style.**

1. **Which is worse?**
   1. Hurting someone’s feelings by telling the truth
   2. Telling a lie and protecting their feelings
2. **Which is the worst mistake?**
   1. To make exceptions too freely
   2. To apply rules too rigidly
3. **Which is the worse to be?**
   1. Unmerciful
   2. Unfair
4. **Which is worse?**
   1. Stealing something valuable from someone for no good reason
   2. Breaking a promise to a friend for no good reason
5. **Which is better to be?**
   1. Just and fair
   2. Sympathetic and feeling
6. **Which is worse?**
   1. Not helping someone in trouble
   2. Being fair to someone by playing favourites
7. **In making decision you rely more on**
   1. Hard facts
   2. Personal feelings and intuition
8. **Your boss orders you to do something that will hurt someone. If you carry out the order, have you actually done anything wrong?**
   1. Yes
   2. No
9. **Which is more important in determining whether an action is right or wrong?**
   1. Whether anyone actually gets hurt
   2. Whether a rule, law, commandment, or moral principle is broken

**Two Ethical Styles**

**Answer Key:**

1. HURTING FEELINGS (**C**)/ TELLING LIE (**J**)
2. MAKE EXCEPTIONS (**J**)/ APPLY RULES (**C**)
3. UNMERCIFUL (**C**)/ UNFAIR (**J**)
4. STEALING (**J**)/ BREAKING PROMISE (**C**)
5. JUST (**J**)/ SYMPATHETIC (**C**)
6. NOT HELPING (**C**)/ PLAYING FAVORITES (**J**)
7. FACTS (**J**)/ FEELINGS (**C**)
8. YES (**C**)/ NO (**J**)
9. HURT (**C**)/ RULE (**J**)

The scores on your questionnaire show how strongly you prefer one or another of two major styles for recognising and resolving ethical dilemmas. The higher your "J" score, the more you rely on an "ethic of justice." The higher your "C" score, the more you prefer an "ethic of care." (To see how each question was scored, see the answer key at the bottom of this page.) Neither style is better than the other, but they are different. They may initially seem opposed to one another because they differ so much on the surface, but they’re actually complementary. In fact, as the scores on your questionnaire show, you probably already rely on each style to a greater of lesser degree. (Not that many people end up with scores of 9/0 or 0/9.) Moreover, the more you can appreciate both approaches, the better you’ll be able to resolve ethical dilemmas and to understand and communicate with people who prefer the other style.

**Ethic of Justice**

An "ethic of justice or rights" is based on abstract, impersonal principles, like justice, fairness, equality or authority. People who prefer this style see ethical dilemmas as involving primarily a *conflict of rights* that can be solved by the impartial application of some *general principle*. The statue "Justice Blindfolded" captures this approach very well. People with this style tend to place a good deal of weight on moral principles, laws or policies, which they believe should be applied to all equally. They usually do not like making exceptions based on special circumstances, and they worry about "setting precedents." This style is more common of men than women, and of people who define themselves in more solitary, individualistic terms. It seems to fit with a more legalistic approach to life that gives allegiance to some external source of authority. This approach can also go along with a traditional management style that prefers to justify decisions according to authority, policies or other impersonal standards, like numbers or executive prerogative.

**Ethic of Care**

An "ethic of care or responsibility" is founded on a sense of *responsibility* to reduce actual harm or suffering. For these people, moral dilemmas generally involve a conflict of duties or responsibilities. People with this orientation believe that the focal point of every ethical dilemma is the *specific individuals involved* and the *particular circumstances* of the case. Solutions, then, must be tailored to the special details of individual circumstances. Notions of equity, or what is *appropriate* or "fitting," tend to be favoured by this approach. Making exceptions does not phase these people, and they tend to feel constrained by policies that are supposed to be enforced without exception. This style is more common of women than men, and of people who define themselves primarily in terms of their relationships with other people. It seems to fit with a more situational approach to life. This orientation seems related to a management style that is sensitive to the consequences of decisions on the individuals involved, that considers consensus-building to be very important, and that emphasizes having people do things as a result of personal "buy-in" rather than simply following orders.