

Morals

What's the Difference Between Ethics, Morals and Values?

Have you ever deemed someone's behavior to be unethical? Have you ever questioned their moral code or the values upon which they base their decisions? When our minds wander to these places, the three terms -- ethics, morals and values -- tend to get a bit murky. As a society, we tend to interchange the three.

So, what's the difference between ethics, morals, and values? The difference is slight but it's there. Understanding the difference between the three will help you delve into your next novel with a greater understanding of each character.

Values

Let's start with values. Values are the foundation of a person's ability to judge between right and wrong. Values include a deep-rooted system of beliefs. They have intrinsic worth, but are not universally accepted. This system allows each individual to determine what should and shouldn't be.

For example, if someone's value system is founded upon honesty, they would probably make a proper judgment between cheating on a college entrance exam (wrong) and studying hard to ace a college entrance exam (right). Conversely, if someone valued achievement and success over honesty, that person may opt to cheat on the exam in order to achieve the desired result. This relates to which value is "worth more" to the individual. These fundamental beliefs are the barometer that go on to guide a person's decisions. Values don't necessarily need to be "system wide" in a group of people. Rather, they tend to be a personal, individual foundation that influences a particular person's behavior.

Morals

Next, we have morals, which are formed out of values. They're the actual system of beliefs that emerge out of a person's core values. Morals are specific and context-driven rules that govern a person's behavior. Because this system of beliefs is individually tailored to a person's life experience, it's subject to opinion.

Sometimes, the words "amoral" and "immoral" are interchanged. However, they're quite different. If someone is amoral, they have no sense of right and wrong. They don't have the foundation that comes with a sound set of values. Meanwhile, if someone is immoral, you can be sure they know right from wrong. They're just choosing to do the wrong thing.

A Moral Dilemma

Given the personal nature of morals, someone might deem an action to be "good" even if it's breaking a law. For example, what if a daughter couldn't afford the life-saving medicine her dying mother needed but she, somehow, had access to the storeroom where the medicine was housed?

In this instance, her core values might tell her stealing is wrong. However, her morality would tell her she needs to protect her mother. As such, the daughter might end up doing the wrong thing (stealing, as judged by her values) for the right reasons (saving her mother, as judged by her morals).

Ethics

Finally, we have ethics. Ethics are the vehicle to our morals. They're our morals in action. Ethics enact the system we've developed in our moral code. As such, someone will behave ethically or unethically. For example, someone's ethics will prevent them from taking action and telling a bold-faced lie or stealing their mother-in-law's secret recipe for cornbread.

This might seem like muddy water to you. The line between morals and ethics is so fine, it's easy to miss. Well, you're not alone. Encyclopedia Britannica considers "morals" and "ethics" to be interchangeable terms. However, the context in which they're used might provide further distinction.

Professional Ethics

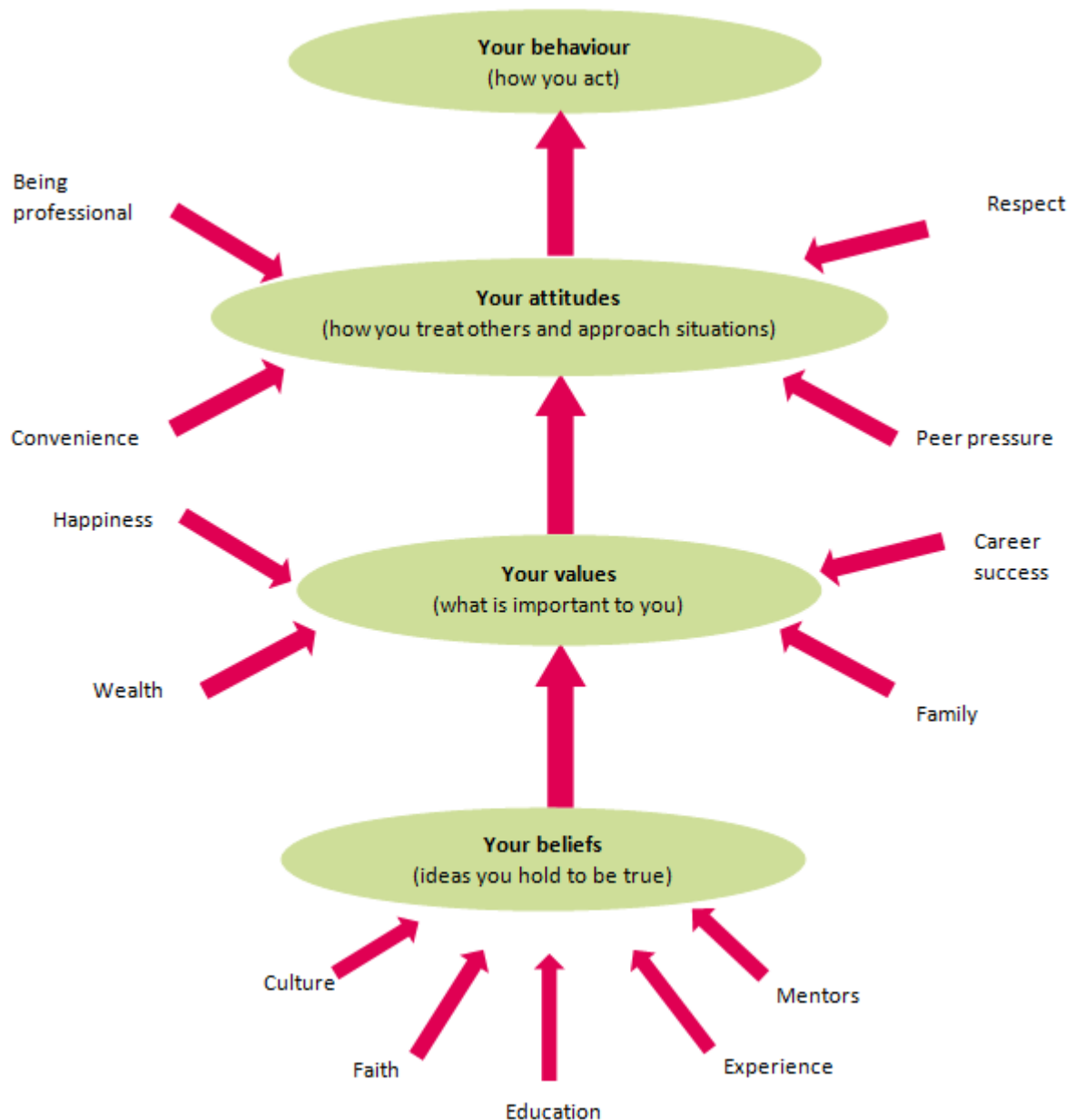
We tend to link morals to matters of religion and spirituality. Meanwhile, ethics are closely linked to matters pertaining to medicine or law. We know doctors are held to a strict code of ethics when they swear the Hippocratic Oath. Similarly, an organization like PETA literally stands for "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals." Consider morals as the rulebook and ethics as the motivator that leads to proper or improper action.

Sound Moral Judgment

Sound moral judgment is rooted in strong values and acted upon by our ethics. It seems like the three are the same, but they're different enough to warrant a closer study. If you're writing a short story, you might want to approach your main character from this viewpoint.

As you develop the conflict your main character will face, try to create a deep-rooted set of values. Consider where those values might have come from. Then, use their morality as the barometer in any decisions they have to make.

Finally, allow your readers to watch your main character choose right or wrong as their ethics come to full view. This evolution will take your readers on an exciting ride. They'll be able to connect with and fully understand the choices the main character makes.



The diagram below illustrates the influences on us that result in our behaviour and whether that resulting behaviour is ethical. The diagram first outlines the sources of our beliefs. It then shows the relationship between the beliefs and values to our attitudes and our resulting behaviour.

What is a belief?

A belief is an idea that a person holds as being true. A person can base a belief upon certainties (e.g. mathematical principles), probabilities or matters of faith.

A belief can come from different sources, including:

- a person's own experiences or experiments
- the acceptance of cultural and societal norms (e.g. religion)
- what other people say (e.g. education or mentoring).

A potential belief sits with the person until they accept it as truth, and adopt it as part of their individual belief system. Each person evaluates and seeks sound reasons or evidence for these potential beliefs in their own way. Once a person accepts a belief as a truth they are willing to defend, it can be said to form part of their belief system.

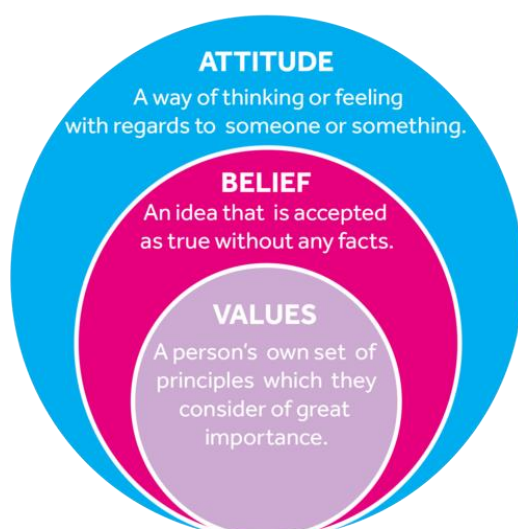
What is a personal value?

Values are stable long-lasting beliefs about what is important to a person. They become standards by which people order their lives and make their choices. A belief will develop into a value when the person's commitment to it grows and they see it as being important. It is possible to categorise beliefs into different types of values – examples include values that relate to happiness, wealth, career success or family. A person must be able to articulate their values in order to make clear, rational, responsible and consistent decisions.

What is an attitude?

Attitudes are the mental dispositions people have towards others and the current circumstances before making decisions that result in behaviour. People primarily form their attitudes from underlying values and beliefs.

However, factors which may not have been internalised as beliefs and values can still influence a person's attitudes at the point of decision-making. Typical influences include the desire to please, political correctness, convenience, peer pressure, and psychological stressors.



Morality

A morality is a set of rules to guide the actions of an individual human being. Rand says about it “a code of values to guide man choice and actions. Morals are judgments, standards and rules of good conduct in the society. They guide the people toward permissible behaviour with regard to basic values. In other words morality is a set of rules that shapes our behaviour in various social situations.

Moral Norms

The Need for Moral Norms

We have become convinced that if there is to be any resolution of the moral crisis, there must, to begin with, be a renewal of agreement on basic moral norms (whether we choose to call them absolute norms, basic values, reasonable guidelines, ideals, or universal principles) which can be used in evaluating both personal and collective activities. We do not need new norms as much as a restatement and reaffirmation of the norms that are already present. It is our belief that these norms already exist within our collective consciousness but such principles are no longer a part of our everyday thinking. The effort to restate is necessary, for without it, the common ground on which society takes its stand might not truly be a moral common ground.

Two things must be said about the search for basic norms and values. First, the necessity of norms cannot be finally established by philosophical or theological debate or social science. We look for norms that match those moral judgments about which persons of good will and sufficient reason are most confident. However, reasonable principles can emerge, we believe, through open and critical discussion, through a "dialectical" process. Through such a process of inquiry and deliberation we hope to call to mind norms already recognized as beyond question and, and to encourage their application in many contexts in which they they have been forgotten or for which they are currently deemed irrelevant.

Second, any norms or values to be employed for moral evaluation in the current world, must be universal in the sense of being general and inclusive. We are a highly diverse society. Amidst that diversity we need basic principles with which to evaluate and determine our responsibilities to each other and to all the peoples of an increasingly interdependent world.

Moral Norms

The New Dialogue participants find themselves recurring to five norms. These may be modified through the dialogue process, but in one form or another, we expect ideas of this sort to be essential in bringing about some resolution of the moral crisis.

- I. Every person has a positive and unique value. That this is so is not an accident in the historical unfolding of the universe.
- II. This unique value is embedded in and expressed through morality. It flowers as/in noble virtues.
- III. An adequately enriching expression of this positive and unique value is rooted in moral freedom, which presupposes but is not the same as political and economic freedom. Moral freedom is at once a blessing of Providence and a social task in which

morally mature persons are necessarily engaged. In its very essence, it is both a gift and a duty.

IV. The social nature of freedom lends itself to the judgment that freedom cannot be enjoyed outside community. At the same time, the fundamental purpose of community is to sustain and enhance the unique value of individual persons.

V. Co dependence and mutual defines the relationship between Nature and the human/personal order.

The basic principles will certainly require further discussion but only brief comments can be presented in these materials. Behind these principles are some fundamental ideas about the human person that each of us recognizes about ourselves and others and that society should also recognize and support. The basic ideas are as follows.

Each and every person should be recognized as being uniquely and intrinsically valuable, with a purpose in the universe and a certain dignity simply by virtue of being human, and thus not reducible to a means to someone else's ends.

The expression of this unique and intrinsic value requires and presumes certain freedoms; moral, political and economic. The unique value of each person is realizable only through the personal freedom, the liberating condition occurring when persons exercise free will in accordance with the norms and ideals of morality, acknowledging duties of care and compassion to other persons, accepting responsibilities to community, and showing respect for Nature. In this way, freedom is rooted in and protected by a covenant. Moral freedom arises out of honoring this covenant binding each of us one to another in recognition of some higher order in the universe.

Moral freedom is, however, dependent in practice on political freedoms. Thus, political covenants, like a Constitution or Declaration of Rights, which guard political and economic liberties along with the political will to uphold these covenants, are required to enable humans to achieve personal moral freedom.

The ideas of intrinsic value, covenant, and morality bring out another aspect of the human person, that in addition to being free and independent, humans are also social beings. Human communities, from family to state, provide systems of mutual support which by teaching and positively reinforcing moral habits enable each of us to realize our unique value. Thus, some ends of persons are mutually beneficial common ends, which are pursued in dependence on and in cooperation with others. As a result of the unavoidable participation in communal ventures, persons have mutual duties of protecting and promoting each co-venturer's well-being. With human activity becoming increasingly globalized and interdependent, it is clear that the duties of protection and promotion should be extended to all persons in the world community.

The fifth principle simply emphasizes that Nature is as dependent on humankind to survive and flourish as much as humans are dependent on it. The natural world in all its specific manifestations, creatures and forests and oceans, should not be seen to exist only for the use of humankind. The natural world must be recognized as having purposes of its own which deserve proper respect and appreciation. Only by maintaining a posture of deep respect can humans hope to survive and flourish in ages to come.

These principles all recognize in one aspect or another that in order to be "moral", personal and collective activities must be sustaining and sustainable. That is, they must be sustaining of human purposes and ends; and to the extent that human community is the basis and context of human purpose, activities must also be sustaining of human community. Secondly, and of equal importance, collective activities must be sustainable with respect to the natural resources used by human societies in pursuit of their ends.

Moral Principles

1. Prescriptive: principles must grammatically formulated as imperatives to emphasize the obligation which is associated with act.
2. Universalizable: principle must apply to all relevant agents equally.
3. Overriding /Compelling: Principles should be the primary motivational factor for actions falling under the umbrella of morality.
4. Public: principles presuppose some social interaction
5. Practicable: Principles must be achievable by ordinary moral agents.

Moral Standards

Moral standards are those concerned with or relating to human behaviour , especially the distinction between good and bad behaviour.

Moral standards involves the rules people have about the kinds of actions they believe are morally right and wrong. As well as the values they place on the kinds of objects they believe morally good and morally bad.

Characteristics of Moral Standards

1. Moral standards involve serious wrongs or significant benefits. Moral standards deal with matters which can be seriously impact, that is injure or benefit human beings.
2. Moral Standards ought to be preferred to other values Moral standards have overriding character or hegemonic authority. If a moral standards states that a person has the moral obligation to do something, then he/she is supposed to do that even if it conflicts with other non-moral standards.
3. Moral standards are not established by authority figures

Moral standards are not invented, formed, or generated by authoritative bodies or persons such as nations' legislative bodies. Ideally instead , these values ought to be considered in the process of making laws.

4. Moral standards have the trait of universalizability Simply it means that everyone should live up to moral standards. To be more accurate, however, it entails that moral principles must apply to all who are in the relatively similar situation.

5. Moral Standards are based on Impartial consideration Moral standards does not evaluate standards on the basis of the interest of a certain person or group, but one that goes beyond personal interest to a universal standpoint in which each person's interest are impartially counted as equal.

6. Moral standards are associated with special emotions and vocabulary Prescriptivity indicates the practical or action-guiding nature of moral standards. These moral standards are generally put forth as injunction or imperatives. These principles are proposed for use, to advise, and to influence to action retroactively, this feature is used to evaluate behaviour, to assign praise and blame, and to produce feelings of satisfaction or of guilt.