**Resolving Ethical Dilemmas**

In the first class of ‘Ethics in Engineering’ we discussed about Role of Ethics & Why we need to follow it.

In this class, we will discuss Ethical Dilemmas.

Let's again have a look at what is Ethics.

At its simplest, **ethics** is a system of moral principles. ... **Ethics** is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described as moral philosophy. The term is derived from the Greek word ethos which can mean custom, habit, character, or disposition.

**“Part of what makes humans unique is our freedom to determine how we’ll act.”**

Ask students ‘What is dilemma?’

A dilemma is a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially ones that are equally undesirable.

Example:

* Uncertainty about which job offer to take
* Wondering whether or not to make the move to a new city

Now let’s start with the Ethical dilemma…

An ethical dilemma (ethical paradox or moral dilemma) is a problem in the [decision-making process](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/strategy/corporate-strategy/) between two possible options, neither of which is acceptable from an ethical perspective. Although we face many ethical and moral problems in our lives, most of them come with relatively straightforward solutions.

On the other hand, ethical dilemmas are extremely complicated challenges that cannot be easily solved. Therefore, the ability to find the optimal solution for ethical dilemmas is critical to everyone.

Every person can encounter an ethical dilemma in almost every aspect of their life, including personal, social, and [professional](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/professional/).

An ethical dilemma arises when a person is forced to decide between two morally sound options, but they may conflict with the established boundaries of a business, a governmental agency, or the law. Some ethical dilemmas may involve following the truth versus being loyal to a friend

At times, situations occur where one cannot make immediate decisions as moral reasons come into conflict. The moral reasons can be rights, duties, goods, or obligations, which make the decision-making complex.

**Types of Complexities**

The difficulties in arriving at a solution, when segregated, can be divided into the following three sections.

* **Vagueness**

This refers to the condition where the doubt lies in whether the action refers to good or bad. This is just like having the thought that following the rules is mandatory. This sometimes includes unwritten rules like being loyal, having respect & and maintaining confidentiality, etc.

* **Conflicting reasons**

When you know about the solutions you have, the making of better choices among the ones you have will be the internal conflict. Fixing the priorities depends upon the knowledge and the moral values one has. The reason why the particular choice is being made makes sense.

* **Disagreement**

When there are two or more solutions and none among them is mandatory, the final solution selected should be best suitable under existing and the most probable conditions. The interpretation regarding the moral reasons behind the choice and analysis should be made keeping in mind whether this is the better or the worse solution in the probable aspects.

**Steps in Facing Moral Dilemmas**

Whenever a person is faced with a moral dilemma, the issue is to be solved with a stepwise approach as this will generate a better output. The steps include the following −

* **Identification**

The step of identification involves the following −

* The issue has to be thoroughly understood.
* The duties and responsibilities of the persons involved are to be known.
* The moral factors related to the issue are to be understood.
* The conflicting responsibilities, the competing rights, and the clashing ideas involved are to be identified.
* **Ranking**

The considerations in the issue are to be listed. Then they have to be ranked according to the priorities. The moral aspect has to be considered to rank the issues. The advantages of a single person should never be given any importance unless any moral reason is behind it. No partiality is allowed.

* **Inquiries**

The inquiry of details involved in the issue is to be completely made. All the facts related to the issue are brought to light. Considering the alternative courses of action for resolving and tracing, full implications are also needed.

* **Discussions**

Discussions are to be made with other members, as different minds look at the issue with different views to give different solutions. The complete analysis of a problem gives chances to different viewpoints, perspectives, and opinions from which a better solution can be drawn.

* **Final Solution**

After analyzing different perspectives considering the facts and reasons based on truths and understanding the flaws which lead to the issue, a final solution has to be drawn out. This solution will add value to the whole analysis, in all aspects.