



COMM2035

Communication, Ethics and Law

Lecture 1 Ethics and Law

Tutorial : Part 2



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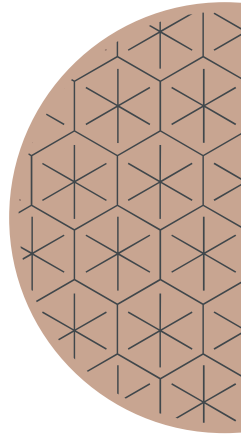
Semester 1 , 2025 / 26



From : 16 Real-Life Examples of Ethical Dilemmas, by The Editors, Up Journey, 16 March 2021.

1. What are some relevant examples of ethical dilemmas that may arise in our day-to-day lives ?
2. How do we decide what to do in such cases?

<https://upjourney.com/real-life-examples-of-ethical-dilemmas>



Ghosting in the workplace

Dr. Steven Mintz, Retired Professor Emeritus, California Polytechnic State University, Business Ethics Speaker , Author, Beyond Happiness and Meaning: Transforming Your Life Through Ethical Behavior

Ghosting occurs when someone you believe cares about you, such as a person you have been dating, disappears from contact without any explanation at all—no phone call, email, or text. They just seem to disappear.


Ghosting a dating partner because you are no longer interested is an unkind act. The person you have been dating has a right to know about your feelings so they can move on with their life. Ask yourself how would you feel if the roles were reversed? You would, most likely, want to be informed to have closure.





Ghosting in the context of interviewing for a job can create an ethical dilemma.

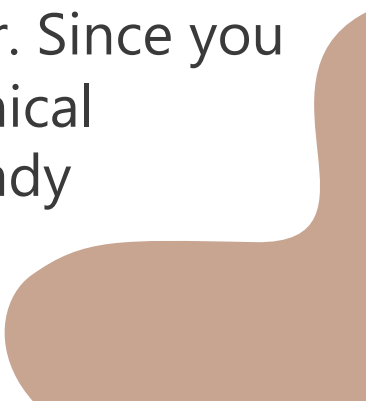
Ghosting occurs when a candidate abruptly disengages from the interview process without explanation. The candidate might fail to inform the interviewer that they have accepted another position.



In some cases, a candidate has accepted a position only to accept a second one and not inform the first employer.

Consider the following facts. You are interviewing for a job. You've gone through interviews at five companies and are anxiously awaiting the responses. You get your first offer and verbally commit to taking the job. You will not start to work for another two weeks.

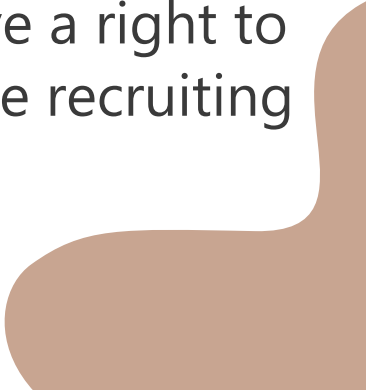
Shortly after accepting the first offer, a second one comes in. It's the better of the two offers and from your preferred employer. Since you haven't started work for the first employer you face an ethical dilemma: Decline the second offer because you have already accepted the first or accept the second offer.



There is something to be said, ethically, to living up to your word and staying with the first acceptance. It does reflect a sense of honesty and personal responsibility.

However, many people in this situation might take a more self-interested position and bow out of the first offer and accept the second.

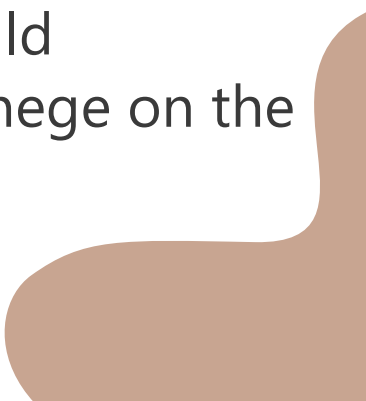
There's nothing wrong with accepting the second offer as long as your reasons are explained to the first employer. They have a right to know why you changed your mind. It may help them in the recruiting process going forward.



In many cases, such as this, it's not so much what your decision is but how you explain it that counts. After all, the first employer probably doesn't want you to work for them if you will regret accepting their job offer.

You have a responsibility to inform the first employer because it made an offer, held a position open for you, and will need to fill it once informed of your decision.

Failing to inform this employer means a position that would otherwise be closed is really open because you plan to renege on the offer.



Ghosting the first employer is a selfish act. You are doing what is easiest not what is ethically appropriate. The key ethical issue is trustworthiness.

Imagine if you didn't tell the first employer and just disappeared and then the second employer somehow found out about the ghosting. Would they be just as anxious to have you come aboard? Should they be concerned about whether you will be a trusted employee?

Your word is your bond and while our minds may change over time it is important to fully explain to the affected parties why that has occurred. Transparency is the key to developing trusted relationships whether in a dating situation or when interviewing for a job.

Medical care versus religious beliefs

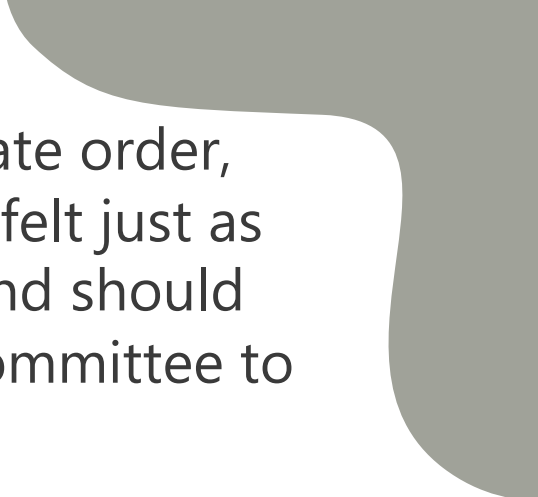
Dr. Holly Wilson, Chair of the Department of Arts, English and Humanities & Professor of Philosophy , Louisiana State University Alexandria.

Some of the thorniest ethical dilemmas for doctors and others in the medical field are those that involve a patient's religious beliefs.

To illustrate to my bioethics students just how true this can be, I often share the example of William MacArthur, which was included in "Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics":


The book explains that William MacArthur was a practicing Jehovah's Witness. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in blood transfusions because the Bible forbids ingesting blood – but, doctors believed MacArthur, who was in end-stage renal failure, would die without a transfusion. Still, MacArthur insisted: No transfusion.

On top of that, the patient had to be resuscitated twice, using CPR, after heart attacks. The doctor treating MacArthur pointed out that further CPR would be medically futile, without the option of a transfusion.



Still, MacArthur refused to sign a do-not-resuscitate order, hoping to live as long as possible. But the doctor felt just as strongly as MacArthur that CPR would not help and should not be performed. He asked the medical ethics committee to weigh in.

This is not rare in medicine; physicians encounter situations in which they insist that a given treatment is unnecessary or not beneficial, but patients or family members insist just as fervently that they want the treatment anyway. But should this mean patients have the right to any treatment they ask for?



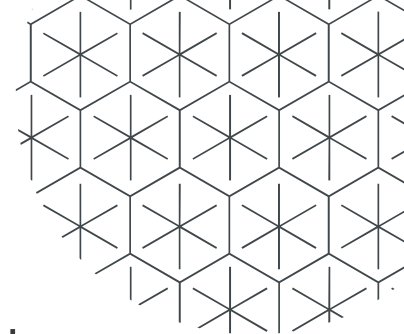
- If we take a **Kantian position** we would have to respect the wishes of the patient and continue to administer CPR. Some doctors prefer this strategy. However, in Louisiana, a physician can refuse treatment they believe is futile but must refer to another physician.
- If we decide to take a **Utilitarianism approach** then we'd have to weigh the harms against the benefits – we'd have to ask if the benefits of CPR really outweigh the harms for Mr. MacArthur.

Misinterpret data deliberately ?

Andrea C. Hummel Founder, Improv For Peace

A number of years ago, I was hired to collect data on the effectiveness of a national preschool learning program. The client, an organization in New York, needed to prove their program was successful enough to have its funding renewed by the Department of Education.

After conducting lengthy interviews and analyzing data shared by individual sites, I was ready to write up a report. The client flew me to New York, all expenses paid and asked for a presentation on my findings before I compiled them.



I had to break the news to them that the data didn't showcase their program as strongly as they'd hoped. (That happens sometimes; it's due to the measurements used, not the program itself.)

They strongly suggested I take another look at the data and interpret it differently – basically analogous to a half-full rather than half-empty glass. I was uncomfortable doing so but felt pressured by the client.

I did believe in the effectiveness of the program and thought it was an innovative approach – but did not want to misrepresent the findings.

What I ended up doing was a compromise: in my report, I shared numbers, graphs, and charts. Then I added summaries for each, stating how I interpreted the statistics (as supportive but not stellar). This left it up to the reader to decide how to interpret the data.

In some ways this is what Robert Mueller did recently when he compiled a report with strong evidence of possible presidential misconduct, yet stopped short of making an accusation.

Share my political leanings and risk losing clients?

Much of my work these days involves bringing together people and groups with conflicting viewpoints and ideologies. To be effective, I have to come across as impartial so both sides can trust and come to the table to heal.

However, I'm not immune to what I hear. The country's current sociopolitical climate and recent shootings and riots have left me questioning whether I can be neutral.

On the one hand, I want to be honest about my emotions and share stories on social media that show we need to come together as a country.

On the other hand, some of the groups I want to work with have been associated with violence and hate. That's why I'd like to help them get to the root of what they want from society and why they feel discounted. But if I'm public about my personal ideologies, I risk alienating them.

So far I haven't found a solution to this ethical dilemma; I feel I'm short-changing both sides of the social conversation.

I was recently offered a gig to promote a new suitcase that I don't really use

Nikki Webster Travel Blogger, BritOnTheMove.

I write a travel blog and I'm often approached with free products to try out and/or review. I've never done one yet because I've yet to be offered one I can stand behind.

I had to think about this for a long time. It would be ridiculously easy for me to promote the suitcase and tell everyone it's fabulous and earn \$25 a pop. A really easy way for me to monetize.

The dilemma is, I'm a die-hard *Samsonite* luggage fan and it took me 10 years of trying many brands before I became brand loyal to Samsonite. I've talked about this on my blog, everyone who knows me personally could tell you what my luggage is.

In other words, having thought through this deeply it would be immoral for me to promote this new suitcase. It would be a total sell-out, telling my readers to buy something that I would not.

Even if I tried the new case which I never did, how could I in good faith tell my readers to buy it when my sole purpose for trying it would have been to get them to buy it?

In the short term, I've likely lost some potential earnings. In the long term, I've protected my brand and that's far more important.



From : 28 Top Moral Dilemma Questions, by Susan Box Mann, ICEBREAKER IDEAS , 20 May 2020

<https://icebreakerideas.com/moral-dilemma-questions/>

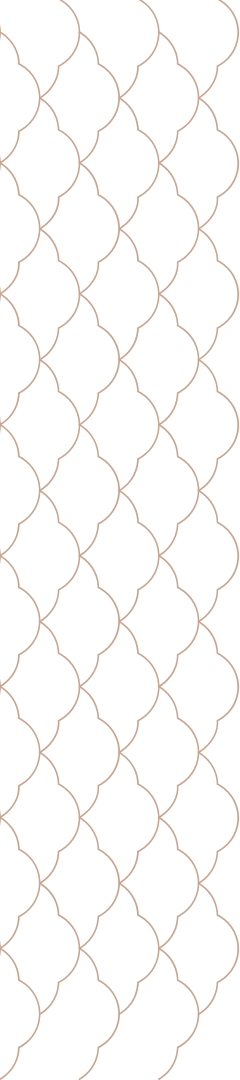
1.Sarcastic Friend

Your friend has a great sense of humour. However, sometimes his jokes involve making fun of others in inappropriate ways. He will point out a physical flaw or look for something odd or different about a person and make an unkind comment. You feel uncomfortable when your friend does this. Do you say something or just laugh along with him?



2. Reward a Job Well Done

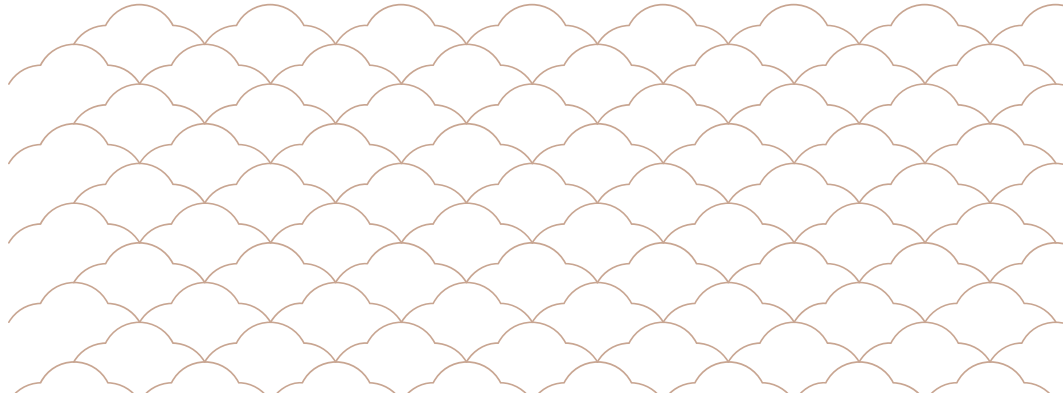
You understand the importance of team work in your job. You share ideas and responsibilities with your team members on a daily basis. In your weekly team meeting with your supervisor, one of your co-workers takes credit for a time and money saving change in operating procedures you devised. Your supervisor erroneously thinks your co-worker came up with the change and your co-worker does not correct the misinterpretation, but allows the boss to not only commend him, but offer a bonus. Do you go to your co-worker and demand he correct the situation, go to your supervisor and explain you should receive the commendation and reward, or keep quiet as you do not believe in ownership of ideas?

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Moral dilemma questions might be characterized as “What if?” questions. It can be hard to take a close look at ourselves and ask, “Will I do the right thing when confronted with a difficult choice?” Many people avoid doing so. However, there can be comfort in knowing what you are really like and how you will respond in difficult situations. We hope this article has encouraged you to weigh carefully the decisions you make every day.

Ethics are defined as moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity (Oxford Dictionary). Many of us may never be faced with many of the previous moral dilemmas.

However, our list of ethical dilemma questions includes many one may encounter in everyday life. Frequently, it is the small decisions we make that truly define our moral character. What will your answer be?

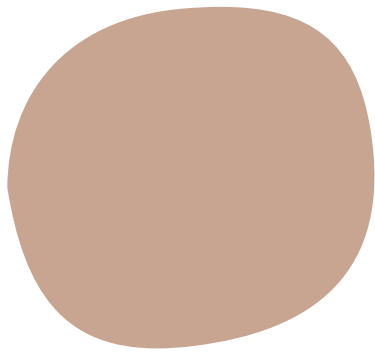


- When making a purchase at a local store, you are given too much change. Do you say something or keep quiet?
- You receive a package at your home that was delivered to the wrong address. The shipping label indicates it is a favourite item that you cannot afford to purchase yourself. Do you keep it or notify the person it was intended for?
- Your neighbour leaves their dog out in all kinds of weather. The poor animal frequently looks like it is miserable. Sometimes it is out of water and seems to be fed rarely. Do you report what you think is happening or stay quiet?

- What if you suspect your neighbour of child abuse? You are not sure if they have a fit-throwing kid or if something is really wrong.
- You are at a party or out on the town with your best friend. They have too much to drink and will not let you drive them home. What do you do?
- Your lunch keeps missing at work. You are pretty sure you know who is taking it each day. Do you confront them, report it to your supervisor or HR, get them back by making a cat food sandwich, or just keep quiet?

- You really like your neighbours and they are a great couple. The only problem is that they throw wild parties occasionally. You think they are into drugs, maybe even dealing. What do you do?
- A friend gives you a gift for your birthday. Unfortunately, it is a type of perfume you are extremely allergic to. Do you say something and ask for a receipt to return it, or keep quiet?
- Your friend has excitedly shared that she has a new love in her life. Unfortunately, you know the guy is a narcissistic player who only stays with a woman as long as he is getting what he wants from the relationship. Do you try to convince her to drop him or let her learn a lesson on her own?

- You buy a pile of clothing items on sale at your favourite department store. When you get home, you realize one of the items is not on the receipt. Do you go back to the store and pay for it or just let it go?
- You are failing a class you were required to take but totally hate. You have an on-line exam. If you fail the exam, you will fail the class. You can cheat without anyone knowing. Do you do so and pass the class?
- Over the summer, you became friends with a person who moved to your town. You have the same interest, like the same music and movies, and have had a great deal of fun. However, your new friend is not attractive and very loud. When school starts, you are embarrassed by the way your friend acts. Do you remain friends or drop the relationship?



END

