

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 4

Ethics Under Pressure



High School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics
High School
Session 4

Ethics Under Pressure

Content: Ethics and Decision-Making Under Pressure

Methods: Role-Playing

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Work Readiness

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Acknowledgements

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Ethics Under Pressure

Overview

Students answer ethics questions and compare their responses to a national poll sponsored by Junior Achievement and Deloitte. Then students engage in role-playing scenarios to practice ethical decision-making in situations where there is pressure to act unethically.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define ethics.
- Recognize, analyze, and apply ethical standards when facing pressure to be unethical.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials. Prepare copies of the Ethics Poll Questionnaire, the Ethics Under Pressure Role-Playing Cards, and the Questions to Consider Worksheets. Separate the cards into individual stacks for each team. Become familiar with the scenarios on the Ethics Under Pressure Role-Playing Cards.

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups of three students for a role-playing activity, and how to assign any remaining students.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place.

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.
- **Poll:** An analysis of public opinion conducted by surveying a random sample of people.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Ethics Poll Questionnaires (1 per student)
- Questions to Consider Worksheets (1 per group)
- Ethics Under Pressure Role-Playing Cards (1 per group)
- Ethics Poll Questionnaire—National Results (1 per volunteer and teacher)
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)

Presentation

Introduction (5 minutes)

Greet the students. Explain that during today's session, they will compare their responses to ethics-related questions with those of teens across the country. The students will have an opportunity to practice making ethical choices while being pressured to be unethical.

Define **ethics** as the **standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.**

Activity

Ethics Poll Questionnaire (15 minutes)

Distribute the Ethics Poll Questionnaire and instruct students to answer each question honestly. To encourage candid answers, tell the students that their feedback will be collected and calculated, but that they should not put their name on their papers. Also, explain that they will find out how teens from around the country answered similar questions.

Allow students 5 minutes to read and answer the questions. Ask them to fold their questionnaire in half when they are done. Announce when 1 minute remains in the activity.

Collect the folded papers, and ask the teacher to tabulate the results while you continue presenting the session material.

Define a **poll** as **an analysis of public opinion conducted by surveying a random sample of people.**

Explain to the students that similar questions were asked of teenagers around the country in the fourth annual Teen Ethics Poll sponsored by Junior Achievement and Deloitte. It found that almost half (44 percent) of those polled felt the need to succeed in school, no matter the cost.

Ask students to consider the following contradictory results and to try to provide possible explanations:

- Fifty-nine percent of teenagers surveyed said they would not act unethically to get ahead or make money, even if they knew for sure they would not get caught.
- But, the majority also admitted to behaving unethically in the last year (69 percent lied, 34 percent illegally downloaded music, and 22 percent cheated on a test).

Ask for student volunteers to offer possible explanations for the discrepancy.

If it is not mentioned, discuss the possible conclusion that students may want to do the right thing, but often act differently when they are under pressure. In the poll, 29 percent admitted they felt only somewhat or not at all prepared to make ethical decisions.

Activity

Ethics Under Pressure Role-Playing Exercise (20 minutes)

Tell students that today they will practice making ethical decisions while being pressured to be unethical. Tell them that, in groups of three, they will take turns suggesting an unethical behavior, answering an unethical request, or observing and commenting on the role-playing.

Organize the class into groups of three. Within the groups, students should assign each of the roles:

- Persuader, who suggests unethical behavior.
- Decider, who makes the choice or answers the suggestion.
- Observer, who watches the role-playing and looks for positive feedback on the persuader's response.

Distribute the Ethics Under Pressure Role-Playing Cards. Each card contains an unethical suggestion and basic activity instructions. Ask the groups to keep the cards face down until the activity begins.

Also distribute one Questions to Consider Worksheet to each group. The objective is for the students to determine an ethical answer to the unethical suggestion, using the information on the worksheet.

Ask students to complete the following procedures:

- The Persuader draws a card, reads it, and role-plays with the Decider the unethical suggestion described on the card.
- All three group members brainstorm an ethical answer, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet as a guide.
- The Decider role-plays an ethical answer with the Persuader, while the Observer watches the interaction.
- The Observer makes positive observations about the role-play and response.
- Group members then switch roles by rotating one seat to the left.
- The new Persuader draws a card, and the process begins again.
- Groups should continue to role-play through as many scenarios as possible in the time allotted.

Explain that the role of the Observer is limited, and that Observers should provide specific, positive feedback about the role-playing and ethical answer.

Announce when 1 minute remains in the activity.

Ask for student volunteers to discuss the process of acting ethically when pressured to be unethical. Ask if the Questions to Consider Worksheet helped them clarify their thoughts and formulate an ethical response to the Persuader's suggestion.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

Ask the teacher to provide the tabulated results of the Ethics Poll Questionnaire, and request student volunteers to comment on any interesting results or comparisons to the national response results. A copy of the Ethics Poll Questionnaire and the response results are attached.

Suggested topics are:

- What questions produced results similar to the national results?
- What questions produced results different from the national results?
- What are some possible explanations for the differences in responses?
- Would students in the class feel comfortable admitting to unethical behavior?

Encourage the students, when they feel they are being pressured to act unethically, to ask themselves questions similar to the ones used during the group brainstorming activity.

Thank the students for their participation.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Explain that they will compare their ethics with those of teens around the nation. Students will have an opportunity to practice their ethics while being pressured to be unethical.

Activity

- Distribute the Ethics Poll Questionnaire, and instruct students to answer each question honestly.
- Collect the questionnaire, and ask the teacher to tabulate the results while you continue the session.
- Explain to students that similar questions were asked of teenagers around the country. Discuss the national poll results.
- Students practice making ethical decisions while being pressured to be unethical.
- Separate the students into groups of three. Group members take turns suggesting an unethical behavior, answering an unethical request, or observing and commenting on the answer.
- Student volunteers discuss the activity.

Summary and Review

- Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.
- Ask the teacher to provide the tabulated results of the class Ethics Poll Questionnaire, and then discuss the results with the students.
- Suggest to students that, when feeling pressured to act unethically, they can ask themselves questions similar to those discussed during the group brainstorming activity.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Ethics Poll Questionnaire—National Results

*Based on selected JA Worldwide-Deloitte 2006 Ethics Poll Results

1. Do you think people who practice good business ethics are more or less successful than those who don't?
8% responded Less Successful
20% responded Just as Successful
50% responded More Successful
22% responded Don't Know

2. Would you ever consider exaggerating your accomplishments on a job application or on a college application to get into a better school?
58% responded No
12% responded Yes
24% responded Maybe
6% declined to answer

3. If you were certain that you would never be caught, would you act unethically to make more money to get ahead?
59% responded No
10% responded Yes
26% responded Maybe
5% declined to answer

4. How would you characterize the pressure on you to succeed in school no matter the cost?
44% responded A Lot of Pressure or Overwhelming Pressure
41% responded A Little Pressure
15% responded No Pressure

5. In the past year, have you done the following? (Circle "Y" for yes, "N" for no.)
 - a. Told a lie. **Yes = 69%**
 - b. Downloaded a song without paying for it. **Yes = 34%**
 - c. Cheated on a test. **Yes = 22%**
 - d. Copied information from the Internet for homework and turned it in without notation. **Yes = 12%**
 - e. Posted untrue information on weblogs like MySpace. **Yes = 10%**
 - f. Cheated in sports. **Yes = 6%**

6. In the past year, do you know of a friend who has done the following?
- a. Told a lie. **Yes = 59%**
 - b. Downloaded a song without paying for it. **Yes = 42%**
 - c. Cheated on a test. **Yes = 34%**
 - d. Copied information from the Internet for homework and turned it in without notation. **Yes = 23%**
 - e. Posted untrue information on weblogs like MySpace. **Yes = 27%**
 - f. Cheated in sports. **Yes = 14%**
7. Generally speaking, how prepared do you think you are to make ethical decisions?
- 29% responded Somewhat or Not Prepared**
 - 34% responded Prepared**
 - 37% responded Very or Extremely Prepared**

Ethics Poll Questionnaire

*Based on selected JA Worldwide-Deloitte 2006 Ethics Poll

1. Do you think people who practice good business ethics are more or less successful than those who don't?
 - Less Successful
 - Just as Successful
 - More Successful
 - Don't Know

2. Would you ever consider exaggerating your accomplishments on a job application or on a college application to get a better job or get into a better school?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Maybe
 - Decline to answer

3. If you were certain that you would never be caught, would you act unethically to make more money to get ahead?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Maybe
 - Decline to answer

4. How would you characterize the pressure on you to succeed in school no matter what the cost?
 - A Lot of Pressure or Overwhelming Pressure
 - A Little Pressure
 - No Pressure

5. In the past year, have you done the following? (Circle "Y" for yes, "N" for no.)
 - Y/N Told a lie.
 - Y/N Downloaded a song without paying for it.
 - Y/N Cheated on a test.
 - Y/N Copied information from the Internet for homework and turned it in without notation.
 - Y/N Posted untrue information on weblogs like MySpace.
 - Y/N Cheated in sports.

6. In the past year, do you know of a friend who has done the following?

Y/N Told a lie.

Y/N Downloaded a song without paying for it.

Y/N Cheated on a test.

Y/N Copied information from the Internet for homework and turned it in without notation.

Y/N Posted untrue information on weblogs like MySpace.

Y/N Cheated in sports.

7. Generally speaking, how prepared do you think you are to make ethical decisions?

Somewhat or Not Prepared

Prepared

Very or Extremely Prepared

Questions to Consider Worksheet

During the group brainstorming portion of each role-playing scenario, discuss the following questions:

- What are the possible choices?
- Is there a right or wrong choice?
- What are possible consequences of each choice?
- Who will be affected by each choice?
- Would I feel guilty because of any of the choices?
- Would any of the choices embarrass me if others found out?
- Do I have an obligation or duty to make a certain choice or to report the situation?
- If there are negative consequences for doing the right thing, how can I face them in a strong, positive way?

Ethics Under Pressure Role-Playing

Scenario A

1. Persuader reads the scenario:
I'm filling out this job application, and I just don't think I'm qualified. I saw that you had a sample application. I could copy the information from that to make mine look better. If you would let me copy that sample, it would really help me get this job.
2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario B

1. Persuader reads the scenario:
I have an interview with a college admission board tomorrow. I have looked at some sample questions, and there are several I don't have a good answer for. There are many questions I don't have answers for, like listing volunteer projects I've worked on recently. Will you help me make up some answers? There's no way for them to check, right?
2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario C

1. Persuader reads the scenario:
I figured out how to make the time clock add 45 minutes per day to my timecard, and no one knows it. Do you want me to show you how to do it with your timecard?
2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.

Scenario D

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

My teacher just told us that if our research paper isn't typed by today, we shouldn't bother handing it in at all. My paper is written, but I don't have any way to type it. Would you help me download one off the Internet?

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario E

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

Math is my worst subject. I really have tried, but I just cannot memorize all the required formulas. If I don't get a good grade on this test, my grade will drop, and I won't be eligible for a scholarship. Can you help me come up with a cheat sheet for the formulas? I'll make you a copy, too.

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario F

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

I love the song that's playing on the radio, but I hear the rest of the CD is awful. I heard that you found a website where I could pirate a copy of the song for free. Will you show me the site?

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.

Scenario G

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

I had a major personal problem last night and didn't get to study for the test. You are so smart; we could come up with a system for you to help me with some answers during the test.

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario H

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

If my mother asks, will you lie and say that I was with you last night? She worries when I go out with my friend Tom, and I don't want to upset her.

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario I

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

I am so angry with LaToya. I told her a secret, and she posted it on her weblog. Help me make up something really awful to say about her on my weblog.

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.



Scenario J

1. Persuader reads the scenario:

My brother told me he can get us steroids before the state championship game. We really could use an advantage heading into such a tough competition. What do you think?

2. All three group members brainstorm possible ethical answers, using the Questions to Consider Worksheet.
3. Decider chooses an answer and role-plays the response with Persuader.
4. Observer observes and offers positive feedback on Decider's answer.

Appendix

Welcome to Junior Achievement's

Excellence through Ethics

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

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Appendix

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Appendix

Thank you for participating in JA!



