

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Overview Statement: When a leader models core values and shows a high degree of moral courage, the team will be more inspired to follow the leader's positive example.

Connection to the Curriculum: Ties in with a major theme of chapter two in *Learn to Lead*, Module One on Personal Leadership.

Estimated Time: 25-30 Minutes

Resources Required: *Learn to Lead*, Module One; Whiteboard (or chalkboard, butcher paper or easel pad).

Key Terms:

Ethics – “A system of moral principles governing the appropriate conduct for a person or group.” Encarta Dictionary

Knee-Jerk – “Not thought through.” Encarta Dictionary

INTRODUCTION

Attention: When a leader models core values and shows a high degree of moral courage, the team will be more inspired to follow the leader's positive example. Why do you agree or disagree with this statement? {Write answers on the board.}

Motivation: Ethics is the foundation of a well developed leader. If we are able to conduct ourselves ethically even before leading others, then we will be better able to lead more effectively.

Overview: Good leaders follow a decision-making process. If you were to bake a cake, you would follow a recipe. Forget an ingredient and your cake will come out wrong. Likewise, a decision-making process is useful because it helps ensure you won't overlook an important aspect of your problem. Today we will discuss two important tools for effective decision-making: living the core values and avoiding the ethical trap.

Your role in this discussion is to be an active participant. You are free to share your views with each other. Please be involved and considerate of one another. My role will be to take notes on what

you say, and I may occasionally ask a question or two. There is no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am simply interested in what you have to say.

MAIN POINT 1: LIVING THE CORE VALUES

{Write CAP's Core Values on the Board: Integrity, Volunteer Service, Excellence, Respect}

Decision-making takes into account available resources and effective planning while working towards a specific objective or goal. The first step is assessing both the task and the resources available to you. Good decision makers stop and think before deciding. They pause to carefully consider the consequences of their decisions instead of “knee-jerk” reacting. They also carefully consider how their decisions impact their core values. CAP's Core Values are listed on the board.

Question: Who are some successful leaders that have shown the CAP Core value of Respect?

Question: How can a decision impact CAP's core values?

Question: Why is it important to not “knee-jerk” to a problem?

While understanding your role in living CAP's Core Values is important, this is only the first step in practicing effective decision-making. Also important is how to avoid the ethical trap.

MAIN POINT 2: AVOIDING THE ETHICAL TRAP

Studies show that when people are confronted with an ethical problem, they often do less than they believe they should do. In such cases, sometimes a leader will make a bad initial decision that turns out to be unethical. This is the ethical trap: two problems pop up in place of one.

For example, suppose you see a student cheat on a test, but you do nothing. Another person sees this and thinks you and the cheating student are both cheaters and may be working together. By not responding to the cheating in the first place, you have created another problem for yourself as people think you're a cheater, too.

Question: What are some other ethical traps where a bad decision causes an unexpected additional problem?

Question: Do ethical decisions always produce ethical solutions? Why or why not?

Question: How can you avoid the ethical trap?

CLOSING

Summary: Good leaders make ethical decisions that reflect their values. What if your decision was to be reported in the news? Would you be proud or ashamed? Consider how your best solution relates to CAP's Core Values.

Remotivation: If a leader models CAP's Core Values and shows a high degree of moral courage, the team will be inspired to follow the leader's positive example.

Closure: "Lead by example" is more than a slogan.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Note to the instructor: Every informal discussion should be followed by one or more hands-on activities that reinforce one or more of the concepts being discussed. These activities should last 25-30 minutes, giving about one hour total block of time for the leadership session at a typical CAP meeting (25-30 minutes for the informal discussion, plus 25-30 minutes for the activities).

Along with any questions found in the activities themselves, you should be sure to ask, "**How does this activity tie in with our discussion?**"

CAP recommends activities from the *Learn to Lead Activity Guide* by Rob Smith (published by the Civil Air Patrol). You are free to substitute another activity, or create your own, as long as you tie in with one or more concepts of the informal discussion.

Main concept for this lesson: **Ethical decision-making.**