

What Would Help?

- A systematic way to recognize issues, decide what to do, and then act on ethical dilemmas, particularly when there no time for leisurely reflection
- Practical, pragmatic tool for making ethical decisions

Ethical Decision Making: From Theory to Teaching Tool

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Combat/Operational Stress Control
Conference

Elizabeth Holmes, Ph.D.

Battlefield Ethics Survey

- One in three Marines said they were unlikely to report a team member for unethical behavior.
- Other studies confirm that people confronted with ethical decisions do less than they believe they should do.

Introduction

- Moral education should prepare individuals to deal with moral dilemmas.
- Often in teaching, cases are used to illustrate a particular philosophical theory.

Introduction

- **The case approach has drawbacks:**
 - Does not explore the decision-making process or the factors influencing it
 - Does not teach how to make ethical decisions in a practical, step-by-step way.

Introduction

We set out to create a tool to teach ethical decision making, in a pragmatic, step-by-step way, based on sound theory that had been validated by research.

Theory

Rest's Four Component Model

- **Moral sensitivity**
- **Moral judgment**
- **Moral motivation/intention**
- **Moral character/action**

Theory

Moral Sensitivity (Moral Awareness)

- **Ability to recognize a moral issue in situation**
- **The situation has moral content so a moral perspective is necessary**

Theory

Moral Judgment

Formulating and evaluating which solutions have moral justification

Theory

Moral Motivation

Intention to choose the moral decision over another solution representing a different value

Theory

Moral Character (Moral Action)

**Arriving at action in a situation,
which involves ego strength,
determination, and ability to
follow through**

Theory

Jones' Moral Intensity Model

Moral intensity influences the components in Rest's model.

Theory

Jones' Moral Intensity Dimensions

- **Magnitude of Consequences**
- **Social Consensus**
- **Proximity**
- **Probability of Effect**

Theory

Magnitude of Consequences

- **How much someone is harmed by or benefits from the decision maker's action**
- **Greater harm or benefit = greater moral intensity**

Theory

Social Consensus

- Degree of agreement among social group that an action is good or bad
- Agreement that act is morally wrong = greater moral intensity

Theory

Proximity

- **Nearness of decision maker to the individuals potentially affected by consequences**
- **Nearness can be physical, cultural, social, or psychological**
- **Greater proximity = greater moral intensity**

Theory

Probability of Effect

- **Likelihood that predicted circumstances and expected level of harm or benefit will occur**
- **Greater probability that action will occur, causing predicted harm = greater moral intensity**

Results

- Validated other studies. People do indeed go through a step-by-step process.
- Participants were morally aware, judged immoral actions negatively, and were inclined toward the intention to act morally.

Results (Cont.)

Moral Intensity Factors

Not all of Jones' Factors affected Rest's Model

- **Social Consensus and Proximity were strong predictors for moral awareness.**
- **Social Consensus, Magnitude of Consequences, and Probability of Effect were strong predictors for moral judgment.**
- **Social Consensus was a strong predictor for moral intention.**

Developing the Tool

LAST CALL

- Created a computer-based “sixth scenario” that allowed participants to play a role in an ethical dilemma.
- At crucial decision points, participants were prompted by questions. They had to make their decisions in real time. The scenario ramified in different directions, depending on their answers

Developing the Tool (Cont.)

LAST CALL

- The questions allowed participants to go through practical decision-making steps, without being aware that's what they were doing.
- A tutorial then taught the four-step model, in the context of different schools of philosophy and their takes on ethics.

Developing the Tool (Cont.)

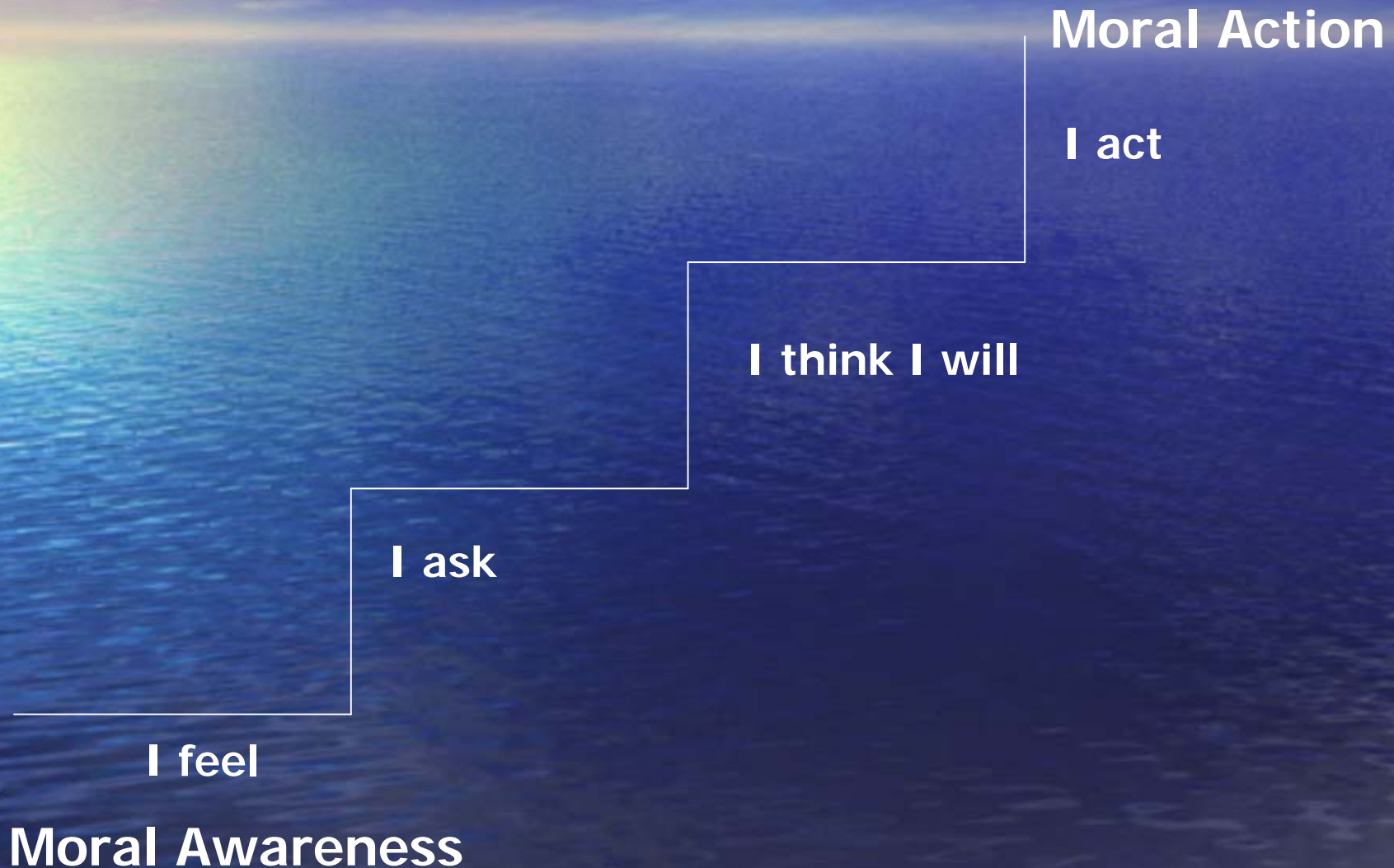
LAST CALL

- **Factors affecting moral intensity were built into the scenario, including:**
 - **Social Consequences**
 - **Probability of Effect**
 - **Magnitude of Consequences**
 - **Proximity**

Conclusion

- First time that we know of in the world that a teaching tool for ethical decision making has been developed based on theory that has been validated by research.
- LAST CALL can be taught from the perspective of the philosopher, the psychologist, or the officer.

Ethical Decision-Making Tool



Step 1: I Feel

- Is something wrong here?
- Is an individual, community, or ideal at risk?
- Is there a dimension of right and wrong?

How close do I feel to those affected by my decision?

What does my social group think?

I feel

Step 2: I Ask

- What produces most good and least harm?
- What respects everyone's rights?
- What treats everyone equally or fairly?
- What kind of person will I be if I act or don't act?

How likely is it that something bad will happen?

What does my social group think?

How much will someone be harmed or benefited?

I ask

Step 3: I Think I Will

- What will I do or not do?
- If I shared my decision with someone I respect, what would the reaction be?

What does my social group think?

I think I will

Step 4: I Act

- The power of others present is most common explanation for failing to act morally
- I carry out my decision, in spite of opposition or possible consequences

I act

Ethical Decision-Making Model

Moral Action

I act

*What does
my social
group think?*

I think I will

*How much will
someone be harmed
or benefited?*

*What does my social
group think?*

*How likely is it that
something bad will
happen?*

I ask

*What does my
social group
think?*

*How close do I
feel to those
affected by my
decision?*

I feel

Moral Awareness