So, Why Are Ethics Important Anyway? Activity

 Developed By James J. Williams

Activity Description:

At-A-GLANCE:
Ethics, or positive moral values, are things such as honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, and integrity. Understanding ethics and demonstrating ethical behavior are ways young people get ahead. It’s not always easy, though, and we sometimes find ourselves in situations where it might be difficult to be honest or loyal. Understanding what it takes to demonstrate ethical behavior can help a young person go a long way!

Icebreaker Quote:
A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better.
Jim Rohn

Icebreaker Discussion:
Think about Rohn’s quote. Why do people help others? There is an expression called WIIFM Or What’s In It For Me…what does helping others do for us?

Purpose of Activity: Students will develop career ethics awareness.
Objectives: Students will...

- define ethical behavior.
- understand the importance of ethics.
- demonstrate ethical behavior.

Activity (what to do):

1. Discuss the term “ethics.” How do we know when something is “ethical?” What does it mean to be ethical? Have students use butcher paper and address this question by writing down their ideas in small groups. Have students share their ideas with the rest of the class.

2. Create a master “Ethics Poster” for display in the class with all student ideas.

3. Use the Ethics Worksheet to have students assess themselves (the worksheet looks at the following characteristics: trustworthiness, responsibility, integrity and honesty). This is a very informal assessment and it is recommended that the activity be used for discussion and reflection only. It is not recommended that students share their scores, as this is a personal.

4. Once students score themselves, discuss some of the ways people set goals to better themselves. Ask for recommendations to share for those who would like to improve their trustworthiness, responsibility, integrity, and honesty. Remind students that we all struggle with these issues from time to time—and it is through discussion, reflection and practice that we improve our ethical behavior.

Extensions:

Use the following scenarios to discuss ethics in the workplace. Encourage student to take notes and add this to their Career Portfolio.

1. There is an old saying that “the customer is always right.” What do you think that means? Do you agree with it? Explain. What would you do if you thought a customer was dead wrong?: Suppose you are a sales clerk in a store and some of your friends want you to let them shoplift. Think about and discuss the following:
   
   a. If you refused to let them shoplift, would that make you a disloyal friend? Explain your answer.
   
   b. How would you respond if your friends said to you:
      
      i. "Just turn your back. You won't even be involved."
      
      ii. "Don't let it bother you. Everybody does it."
      
      iii. "The store will never miss it."
      
      iv. "This store rips everybody off. We're entitled to get even."

   c. If they shoplift despite your objections, what would you do?

2. Suppose you have some personal problems that are troubling you. Is it okay to attend to these problems while you are at work? To what degree (or under what circumstances) do you think it's okay to deal with your own personal affairs on company time?

3. When you accept a job, what does the employer owe you, and what do you owe the employer?

4. Can you think of any other scenario in which you might face an ethical dilemma? How would you deal with it?
**Reflection/Evaluation of Learning:**

- Some people think you can’t get ahead by being honest. Do you agree or disagree with this statement. Explain.

- Get back into your original groups. Take out your original group poster and revisit your ideas. Are there any ideas you would change or reconsider? If so why? Be prepared to share your thoughts with the rest of the class.

- As a class revisit the master Ethics Poster. What would you change or re-consider? Why?

**Duration/Length:**

Two 45-50 minute class periods or one 90 minute block period.

**Tools/Materials Needed:**

- Ethical Behavior Worksheet (1 per student)
- Pencil
- Butcher Paper (White, Yellow, or any light color that is easy to read from a distant) per group and one master for each class
- Set of Markers per group

**Partnerships Recommended:**

CDF
- Classroom Teacher, Counselor, or other educational professional
- Special Ed paras

**Developmental Level (e.g. Preschool, Elementary, Middle, College, etc.):**

Adaptable for Elementary, Middle School, High School, and College.

**Suggestions for Scaling (ideas for use with students of other ages):**

- Number of and type of questions asked.
- Length of time.
- For lower grade levels provide actual graphic organizers.
- For lower grade levels provide more guided practice and direction.
- When done within semester of school year.
- Advancing skill over time (activity that transcend entire school year allowing for increased complexity).
- Have students keep this activity handy to remind them of their visualized goal and make modifications as things change.
Standards Covered *(NCDA Guidelines, WY C/VE Standards, ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors)*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Standard 1</th>
<th>Standard 2</th>
<th>Standard 3</th>
<th>Standard 4</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **K-5**     | Career Development and Readiness.  
CV5.1.4: Students complete task within an allotted time by acquiring, storing, organizing, and using materials and space efficiently. | Communication and Collaboration.  
CV5.2.2 Students share new concepts learned through peer teaching and presenting to a group. | Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.  
CV5.3.4 Students seek help from appropriate people (staff, students, parents, etc.) and appropriate resources. | Technical Literacy.  
CV5.4.1 Students use a variety of methods including oral, written, graphic, pictorial, and/or multimedia in order to create and share a product. |
| **6-8**     | Career Development and Readiness.  
CV8.1.1 Career aware students explore several career pathways including but not limited to outlook, salary, needed training, duties, and lifestyle.  
CV8.1.3 Career aware students prepare a self improvement plan including secondary and postsecondary programs to gain desired knowledge and experience toward possible career opportunities. | Communication and Collaboration.  
CV8.2.1 Career aware students effectively communicate using a variety of appropriate methods. | Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.  
CV8.3.4 Career aware students plan, manage and complete projects in a timely and effective manner. | Technical Literacy.  
CV8.4.4 Career aware students integrate and translate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and in words. |
| **9-12**    | Career Development and Readiness.  
CV12.1.1 College and career ready students evaluate current knowledge and interests in order to set career goals.  
CV12.1.3 College and career ready students prepare an educational and career plan to enable them to gain desired knowledge and experience.  
CV12.1.4 College and career ready students demonstrate employability skills that enable them to be responsible and contributing citizens and employment. | Communication and Collaboration.  
CV12.2.1 College and career ready students communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason. | Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.  
CV12.3.4 College and career ready students demonstrate creativity and innovation while considering the environmental, social, and economic impact of decisions. |
References/Developed By:

- FM 22-100 Army Leadership; Be Know, Do US Army Manual
- US Army Values and Code of Ethics
- Jim Rohn, Motivational Speaker
- Website Source: www.GoodCharacter.com
- FOCUS (36 10 Minute Lesson Plans) By Phil Boyte, Micah Jacobson, & Ron Jones
- MN Program of Study Web Site
- Facilitating Career Development Third Edition by Barbara H. Suddarth & David M. Reile
- Designing and Implementing Career Services by National Career Development Association
- GAcollege411 xpand Your Opportunities @ www.gacollege411.org.
- University of Missouri Student Success Center MU Career Center
- Compare and Contrast images at Google Images
- 2014 Wyoming Career & Vocational Education Content Performance Standards by Wyoming State Board of Education
### Ethical Behavior Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I keep my promises; I am a person of my word</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am reliable; I follow through on commitments</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am honest</td>
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<tr>
<td>I keep secrets; I never betray a confidence or a trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have integrity; I don’t cave into temptation</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am loyal when loyalty is appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am truthful, sincere, and straightforward</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t lie, cheat, or steal</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t intentionally mislead others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I always try to do what is right, even when it is difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am true to my very best self</td>
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<tr>
<td>I live up to the highest ethical standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t compromise my values by giving into temptation</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do what needs to be done</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am reliable and dependable</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am accountable for my actions; I don’t make excuses or blame others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use good judgment and think about the consequences of my actions (before I act)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I exercise self control</td>
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**Your score can range anywhere from 18 to 54.**

The higher your score, the more ethical behavior you demonstrate on a regular basis. If you scored low, or are unhappy with your score, it just means you have a little more work to do 😊. We are ALL a work in progress—and we can ALWAYS choose to change our behaviors. If you think you would like to talk to someone about your score, please show this paper to a teacher or CDF or an adult you trust.

Adapted from [www.GoodCharacter.com](http://www.GoodCharacter.com)