

# ETHICAL INTELLIGENCE

**Five Principles for Untangling  
Your Toughest Problems  
at Work and Beyond**

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Please note that nothing in this book should be considered legal or psychological advice.

The stories are true or are based on events that happened. In some cases, the author has changed names and other details to protect confidentiality.

A different version of some of this material appeared in Bloomberg Business-week Online.

Text design by Tona Pearce Myers

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Weinstein, Bruce D.

Ethical intelligence : five principles for untangling your toughest problems at work and beyond / Bruce Weinstein.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-60868-054-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Applied ethics. 2. Business ethics. I. Title.

BJ1031.W38 2011

170—dc23

2011028707

First printing, October 2011

ISBN 978-1-60868-054-2

Printed in Canada on 100% postconsumer-waste recycled paper



New World Library is a proud member of the Green Press Initiative.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## CHAPTER I

# Introducing the Principles

**H**ow ethically intelligent are you? Take the quiz below, then read on. In this chapter and the two that follow, you will learn the five principles of ethical intelligence and discover your ethics IQ.

### ETHICS QUIZ

1. You notice that your friend Heather has posted a new picture of herself on Facebook in which she is smoking a bong with one hand and holding a bottle of vodka in the other. What would you do?
  - A. Tell her you don't think this photo is a good idea.
  - B. Don't say anything about it to her.
  - C. "Like" the photo.
  - D. Copy the photo to your hard drive and use it against her if she ever double-crosses you.
2. You're having lunch at a restaurant and overhear two colleagues, Bob and Ray, talking about a client with whom your business is having difficulty. They mention the client by name as well as specific information about the problem. What would you do?

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- A. Approach them and mention your concerns about confidentiality.
  - B. Ignore it.
  - C. Tell your supervisor what you witnessed.
  - D. Record your colleagues with your cell phone's video camera and post the clip on YouTube.
3. You take your twelve-year-old son to the movies. At the box office, you see a sign that says, "Children up to eleven: \$6.00. Adults: \$12.00." The movie theater's management thus considers your son to be an adult. What would you do?
- A. Ask for one adult and one child ticket.
  - B. Ask for two adult tickets.
  - C. Give your son the money and have him ask for a ticket.
  - D. Ask your son what he thinks you should do, and then do whatever he suggests.
4. An employee you supervise comes to work late, spends a lot of time shopping online, takes long lunches and coffee breaks, and leaves early. A few months ago, you fired someone for doing the same thing. This person, however, is the daughter of a close personal friend. You've talked with her several times about her conduct, but the problems continue. What would you do?
- A. Fire her.
  - B. Ignore it.
  - C. Talk with her again and tell her this is her last chance to straighten up.
  - D. Ask your friend (her parent) to talk with her.
5. You wake up on a workday with the flu. What would you do?
- A. Stay at home and rest.
  - B. Stay at home and work.

- C. Go to work but avoid socializing with people.
- D. Go to work but socialize only with the people you don't like.

### DIFFERENT CHOICES, DIFFERENT REASONS

Now that you've made your selections, on what basis did you make them? Which of the following guided your selections?

- How you imagined feeling in each scenario
- The way you've acted in similar situations in the past and what happened as a result
- What you were taught was right and wrong
- What you understand is expected of you as a member of your religious tradition
- How you might stand to benefit from each possible option
- What others would think of you if they knew you'd made one choice over another

If you present the quiz to a group of your friends and coworkers, you'll probably find a range of responses to each scenario. Also, the reasons people give for making their choices may be different from yours, even if you made the same choices. For example, both you and a coworker might choose to stay home and rest when you wake up with the flu, but your reason might be, "I don't want to make other people sick," whereas your coworker's justification could be, "Any day I don't have to go in to the office is fine with me."

Whatever choices you've made, you probably believe that yours were the best ones. (Otherwise, why would you have made

them?) But how do you reconcile this with the fact that other people you like and trust might make different choices in the same scenarios or have different reasons for making the same choices? They're good people, but each one believes that his or her choices (and reasons) are the best ones, even though they may be different from yours. How can we tell what the best solutions actually are, no matter who is looking at the problem?

The answer lies in five simple principles:

1. Do No Harm
2. Make Things Better
3. Respect Others
4. Be Fair
5. Be Loving

There are several things worth noting about these principles:

- You know these principles already.
- They're the basis of both religious traditions and secular societies.
- They're tremendously difficult to live by.

When you were young, you learned these principles from your parents and teachers. If you went to Sunday school, the principles were taught in every class you took. If you were a member of a civic organization such as the Boy or Girl Scouts, or the 4-H, Optimist, Rotary, or Kiwanis clubs, these principles guided just about everything you did there.

But the five principles above aren't just for kids. As Jeffrey Moses illustrates in his book *Oneness: Great Principles Shared by All Religions*,<sup>1</sup> the principles are the bedrock of Eastern and Western religious traditions alike. Indeed, it's hard to imagine how any society or culture could fail to honor these principles; you'd be afraid to leave your house, for example, if Do No Harm did not guide the behavior of your fellow citizens. All five principles are the glue that

binds us together as a nation, as persons of faith, and in every relationship we have or are likely to have.

In spite of their central role in everyday life, it's easy to forget how important they are and to act instead on impulses that beckon us but that may, in the long run, be more hurtful than helpful.

Suppose, for example, that you're driving down the highway one afternoon and the driver behind you starts flashing his lights and honking his horn in an effort to get you to speed up. But you're already traveling at the speed limit, and you're not even in the fast lane. There is no good reason to go faster than you already are, so you ignore him.

All of a sudden, he moves over, rushes by you, makes an obscene gesture, and appears to mutter something nasty. It's tempting to return the gesture, flash your lights at him, and even roll your window down and curse back at him. But what would the consequences of this decision be? Most likely, you would:

- Feel worse, not better
- Make the other driver feel worse, not better
- Increase the risk of injury or death to you and those around you
- Risk getting pulled over by a police officer
- Set a poor example of how to respond to difficult situations, if anyone (especially your child) is in the car with you

It's understandable that you'd want to return one rude gesture with another, and I know I'm not the only one who has given in to this impulse on occasion. But it's one thing to understand the impulse and quite another to justify acting on it. Giving him "a taste of his own medicine" in the above situation may harm all concerned — including you and fellow drivers who have no stake in the matter and deserve to be able to travel safely.

Thus, if you look at the situation objectively, it would be wrong

to do something that would make things worse. You might not be able to get the hostile driver to calm down, but you can surely avoid causing harm to him, yourself, your passengers, and other drivers. The first principle, Do No Harm, shows you the best way to respond in this situation.

In fact, all five principles mentioned above provide excellent guidelines for making the best possible decisions in every area of your life. These principles have legal, financial, and psychological implications; but they are first and foremost principles of ethics, and they form the core of what I call “ethical intelligence.” In this book, I will show you how to enhance your ethical intelligence by mastering these principles, so that you’ll be equipped to make the right decisions at work and in your personal life.

First, let’s see how ethical intelligence differs from its close cousin, emotional intelligence.

### ETHICAL INTELLIGENCE VERSUS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In 1995, a psychologist and science journalist named Daniel Goleman shook up the world with his book *Emotional Intelligence*.<sup>2</sup> Goleman described an indispensable element of professional and personal success: the ability to discern how others are feeling, which can be quite different from the ways they present themselves to the world.

Suppose, for example, that you and I know each other well and we meet for coffee one day. You ask me how I’m doing, and I say, “I’m fine.” But several signs suggest I’m anything but fine: I avoid eye contact, which is unusual for me; my voice is quieter than it normally is; I’m not smiling, which isn’t like me; and I seem unusually distracted. It is your emotional intelligence that enables you to notice these signs and to correctly conclude that I’m not fine at all. Someone who doesn’t possess your level of emotional

intelligence (or any at all) wouldn't notice that something is amiss when we meet.

But now comes a tough question: What should you do? The answer isn't obvious. Is it better to mention the fact that I don't seem all right to you, or should you just ignore it? If our chat over coffee doesn't give you any useful information about what's really going on, would it be right to follow up with a phone call or email, or simply say to yourself, "He's an adult, and if he wants to tell me what's going on, he will"? Emotional intelligence alone won't — and can't — tell you what you ought to do. That's because emotional intelligence is a *psychological* matter, but the question "What's the right thing to do?" is an *ethical* one. To be fully human, it's not enough to have emotional intelligence. We need ethical intelligence, too.

Let's take a closer look at the five principles that form the core of ethical intelligence, and then we'll consider how they can help us determine the right way to tackle the problems from the beginning of this chapter.



## SUMMARY

The five principles of ethical intelligence are:

1. Do No Harm
2. Make Things Better
3. Respect Others
4. Be Fair
5. Be Loving

As the quiz that opened this chapter suggests, it's not always easy to do the right thing, or even to know what the right thing is. The principles of ethical intelligence provide the foundation for making the right choices in every area of your life.