

'Three heads are better than one'

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



LEARNING INTENTIONS:

- To explore ethical decision-making frameworks and principles such as intention, truth and/or harm.
- To develop skills to analyse different ethical decision-making frameworks and/or principles.

“ *With a difficult problem/decision to make, one head may not be enough*

– Matthew Lipman, Philosophy For Children.

LEVELS: 5-10

PREPARATION/MATERIALS:

6 flash cards with these terms on them placed face down in the centre of the discussion space (flash cards available in Ethical Decision-making tools).

<p>TRUE TRUTH / EVIDENCE</p>	<p>FALSE FALSEHOOD / NO EVIDENCE</p>
<p>NOT MALICIOUS* GOOD INTENTIONS</p>	<p>MALICIOUS BAD/MEAN INTENTIONS</p>
<p>NOT HARMFUL* BENEFICIAL CONSEQUENCES</p>	<p>HARMFUL HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES</p>

Or students can use the handout which follows after these instructions.

*Please note that not being malicious does not necessarily mean that someone is acting with good intentions; it is possible that no intentions were present. It is also possible that even if no harm was caused there may not have been any beneficial consequences either.



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LEARNING ACTIVITIES/TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

1. If using the flash cards. Turn sets of flash cards over and check for understanding. To check for understanding ask students to give an example of one of the terms written on the flash cards.
2. Read and explain 'Three heads are better than one' decision making framework.

There are three considerations that one can* take into account when making an ethical decision.

HEAD ONE	HEAD TWO	HEAD THREE
<p>The Truth head</p> <p>This head considers whether what you are going to say is true or false.</p>	<p>The Intention head</p> <p>This head considers whether your intentions are malicious (bad/mean) or not. It asks you to consider the motivations behind your ethical decision.</p>	<p>The Harmful head</p> <p>This third head asks you to consider the outcomes, the consequences of your decision, in particular if there is evidence to suggest that the decision will cause harm or not. Ensure to distinguish who or what is harmed and how.</p>

These three considerations are called the 'Three heads are better than one' and it is suggested that each 'head' may be beautiful or ugly. In other words, each criteria has a positive and a negative aspect.

Therefore, if you think a statement is false, malicious and harmful (all red), it is clearly wrong for one to say (or do) it. On the other hand, if a statement is true, not malicious and not harmful (all green), it is permissible to say (or do) it.

However, if any action under consideration has a combination of green and red then the action or decision may require further thinking. One could not definitely say that it is absolutely the right or wrong thing to say or do.

3. Provide students with the ethical decision/problem under consideration.
4. Using the flash cards students can either vote, or complete the handout, considering if they think the decision is true, malicious, and harmful or not.
5. Depending on the level you complete this activity with you can ask students to complete the think sheet.
6. This activity can then be followed by a class discussion, further research (perhaps the class needs more evidence for the truthfulness or if the decision or act will cause harm before they can go further), or the application of the ethical decision (it may be that it was a problem that the class or the school was dealing with).

* Note the use of the word 'can' here. Ethical decision-making is not limited to these three factors for consideration, however, they are some of the factors that the Victorian Curriculum's Ethical Capability is asking students to consider, particularly from Level 5 onwards.

The following page is the student handout.



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Action or Decision under consideration:

Tick, highlight or circle which of the following you think applies to the action or decision under consideration.

<p>Truth head? i.e. Is it true that we shouldn't lie?</p>	<p>TRUE Truth / Evidence</p>	<p>FALSE Falsehood / No Evidence</p>
<p>Intention head? i.e. Am I lying to hurt someone?</p>	<p>NOT MALICIOUS Good Intentions</p>	<p>MALICIOUS Bad/Mean Intentions</p>
<p>Harm head? i.e. If I lie will someone be hurt or injured?</p>	<p>NOT HARMFUL Beneficial Consequences</p>	<p>HARMFUL Harmful Consequences</p>

Is the act permissible? Why or why not?

Is the act (saying or doing) 'in between'? What factor makes it in between? How might you resolve this?



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TRUE

Truth / Evidence

FALSE

Falsehood / No

NOT MALICIOUS

Good intentions



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HARMFUL

Harmful

MALICIOUS

Bad intentions

NOT HARMFUL

Beneficial

