



Codes of Conduct and Moral and Ethical Dilemmas: an introduction

Psychology in Practice

Dr Ceri Phelps

What is moral judgement?

- a process of reasoning
- guided by our beliefs of what is right and what is wrong (Rest, 1994).
- influenced by social and cultural norms and values.



Yes or no?

it is okay to kill one person if it would
save five, because more people would
be saved....



Yes or no?

- it is okay to kill one person if it would save five, because more people would be saved....
- Moral dilemmas are challenging because there are often good reasons for and against both choices.
- A situation where two moral principles conflict with each other

What is ethics?



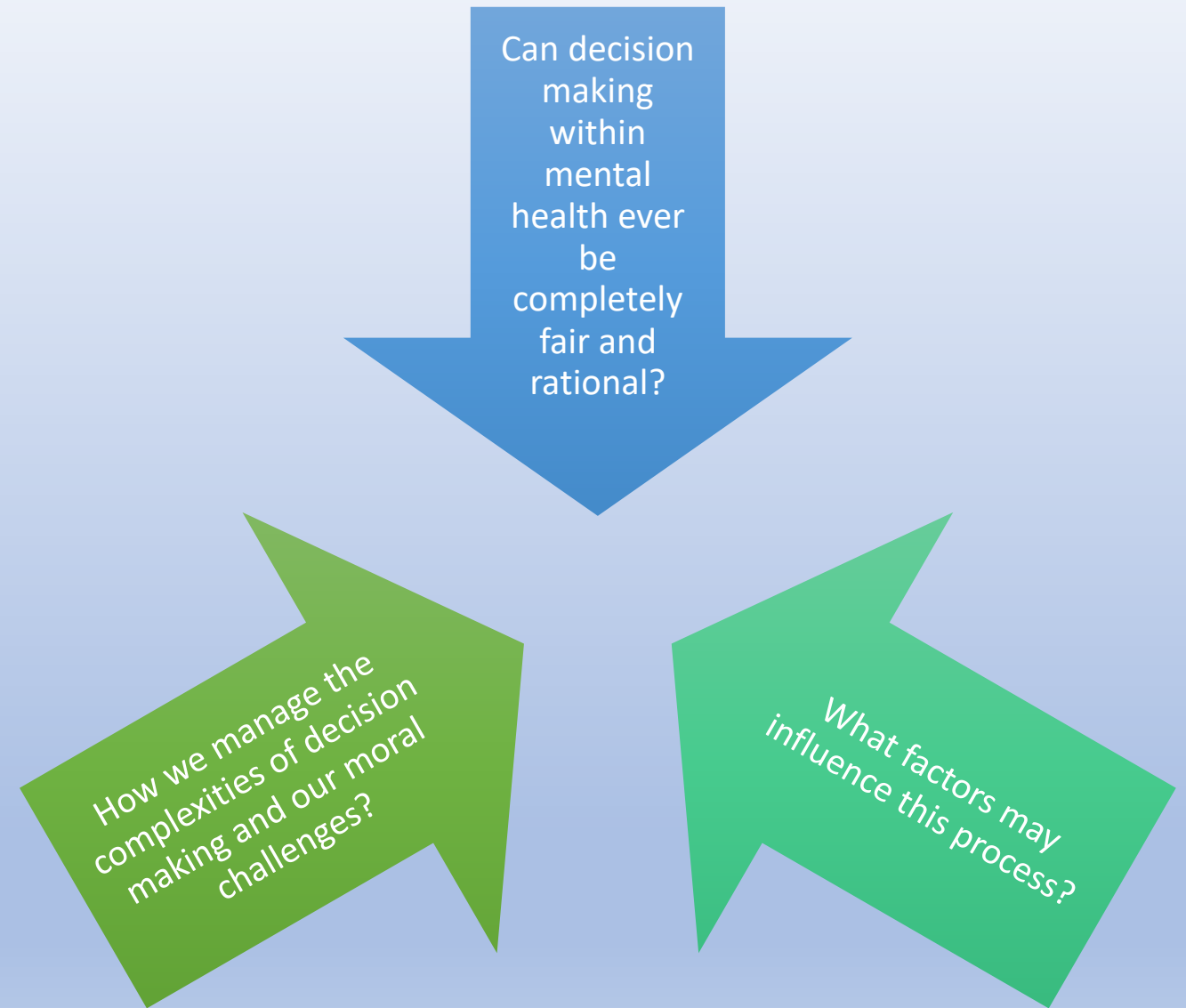
thinking about reasons in terms of values



BPS Code of Conduct:

Respect,
Competence,
Responsibility
Integrity

Ethical Decision making



Ethical Decision making

Informed decision making

Shared decision making

both client and/ or clinician characteristics, such as age, gender, education and culture may affect moral judgements and decisions (Graham et al., 2016; Hill, 2010).

Ethical Dilemmas

“An ethical dilemma arises when two or more of the values found in the ethical principles conflict. Such a dilemma is an *ethical* dilemma because its resolution must appeal to values. Since, by definition, more than technical expertise is at issue in an ethical dilemma, even the most skilled practitioner cannot resolve an ethical dilemma by appealing to technical expertise alone. Resolving an ethical dilemma requires identifying the relevant values and weighing those competing values against one another to determine which receives priority”

[Ethics Rounds--On being an ethical psychologist \(apa.org\)](#)

Vignette 1

Dr. Goodfriend receives a call from Buddy, his very close high school friend. Dr. Goodfriend speaks with Buddy about once every six to nine months. During those calls, the conversations typically focus on careers, family members, and the whereabouts about other classmates.

Buddy phoned Dr. Goodfriend in an apparent emotional anguish by the tone of his voice. Buddy states that he has been feeling "stressed" over the last month. He explains that he recently lost his job and has been worrying about the financial impact that this is having on his family. Buddy adds that he has had trouble sleeping, has stopped exercising, has little energy, and fleeting thoughts of hurting himself. Buddy also shares that he has been short tempered with his wife and kids.

During the 90-minute call, Dr. Goodfriend tries to be a good listener, empathizes with Buddy's difficult situation, offers advice on ways that Buddy can better manage his stress, provides him with general encouragement, and suggests a book that outlines stress management and anxiety reduction strategies.

At the end of the call, Buddy tells Dr. Goodfriend that he is feeling much better. Just as he is about to hang up, Buddy says, "Thanks. My wife told me that I should see a therapist but I told her that I could talk with you and that it would be much cheaper."

Dr. Goodfriend is unclear whether Buddy is serious or joking.

If you were Dr. Goodfriend, how do you feel about the phone call?

Does Dr. Goodfriend need to phone his high school friend to clarify his last comment?

Does Dr. Goodfriend need to encourage Buddy to become involved in therapy if symptoms persist?

Should Dr. Goodfriend call Buddy and offer a few referrals?

What factors influence this decision?

- [Ethics and Psychology: Vignette 21: A Phone Call from a Friend \(ethicalpsychology.com\)](http://ethicalpsychology.com)

Vignette 2: A Blog Attack

- Psychologist Dr. Shermer learns from a colleague that she has been described in very unfavorable terms in a blog posted by an individual who publicly identifies herself as a patient of Dr. Shermer.
- Dr. Shermer reviews the blog information. The author is likely not a current patient. The blogger insults Dr. Shermer's appearance, her style of dress, and her office. In essence, the blogger combines factual and inaccurate information into a well-formed, yet highly erroneous, description about Dr. Shermer's role in the community and in the legal system. There are many descriptions of Dr. Shermer that are blatantly false or misleading. Some of the falsehoods on the blog would be serious violations of the Ethics Code.
- Upon reviewing the charts of several possible candidates as the offensive blogger, Dr. Shermer believes the blogger to be someone she evaluated in the past for a national security position. The likely blogger can be emotionally labile and frequently feels a victim of "the system." Dr. Shermer indicated a number of pathological characteristics in the report. Dr. Shermer does not make the determination for the security clearance, but serves as a consultant for the government agency.
- Dr. Shermer has a presence on social media and fears how her online reputation may be adversely affected by these ongoing blog posts. She also fears that if she draws too much attention to the blog, then the blogger will gain greater traction. Dr. Shermer fears the risk that the information could go to a licensing board and result in an investigation. Although completely unwarranted, an investigation would add unnecessary stress in her life. There is also a risk that her reputation could be ruined if the former client's blog posts gain a larger following.
- The psychologist wonders how she can take proactive action.
- Dr. Shermer considers hiring an attorney.
- Dr. Shermer also considers hiring an online reputation management company.
- Dr. Shermer calls you for a consultation. What are some recommendations that you would make to Dr. Shermer?
- How would you feel if you were Dr. Shermer?

[Ethics and Psychology: Vignette: 29: A Blog Attack \(ethicalpsychology.com\)](http://ethicalpsychology.com)

BPS Code of Ethics & Conduct: Respect

Members value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over persons and peoples and with particular regard to people's rights.

- In applying these values, members should consider:
- Privacy and confidentiality;
- Respect;
- Communities and shared values within them;
- Impacts on the broader environment – living or otherwise;
- Issues of power;
- Consent;
- Self-determination;
- The importance of compassion, including empathy, sympathy, generosity, openness, distress tolerance, commitment and courage.

BPS Code of Ethics & Conduct: Competence

Members value the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in their professional work and the importance of working within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education and experience.

- In applying these values, members should consider:
- Possession or otherwise of appropriate skills and care needed to serve persons, peoples and organisations;
- The limits of their competence and the potential need to refer on to another professional;
- Advances in the evidence base;
- The need to maintain technical and practical skills;
- Matters of professional ethics and decision-making;
- Any limitations to their competence taking mitigating actions as necessary;
- Caution in making knowledge claims.
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BPS Code of Ethics & Conduct: Responsibility

Statement of values: Members value their responsibilities to persons and peoples, to the general public, and to the profession and science of psychology, including the avoidance of harm and the prevention of misuse or abuse of their contribution to society.

- In applying these values, psychologists should consider:
- Professional accountability;
- Responsible use of their knowledge and skills;
- Respect for the welfare of humans, non-humans and the living world;
- Potentially competing duties.

BPS Code of Ethics & Conduct: Integrity

Statement of values: Members value honesty, probity, accuracy, clarity and fairness in their interactions with all persons and peoples, and seek to promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours.

- In applying these values, members should consider:
- Honesty, openness and candour;
- Accurate unbiased representation;
- Fairness;
- Avoidance of exploitation and conflicts of interest (including self-interest);
- Maintaining personal and professional boundaries;
- Addressing misconduct.

Read and make notes on the following two brief articles...

- [Dilemmas in healthcare | BPS](#)
- [Ethics Rounds--On being an ethical psychologist \(apa.org\)](#)