A Road Map for Ethical Responses

Module 3

Applying Ethics: A Four-Step Framework

Facilitated by Vicki Verge, MSW, RSW

Manitoba College of Social Workers

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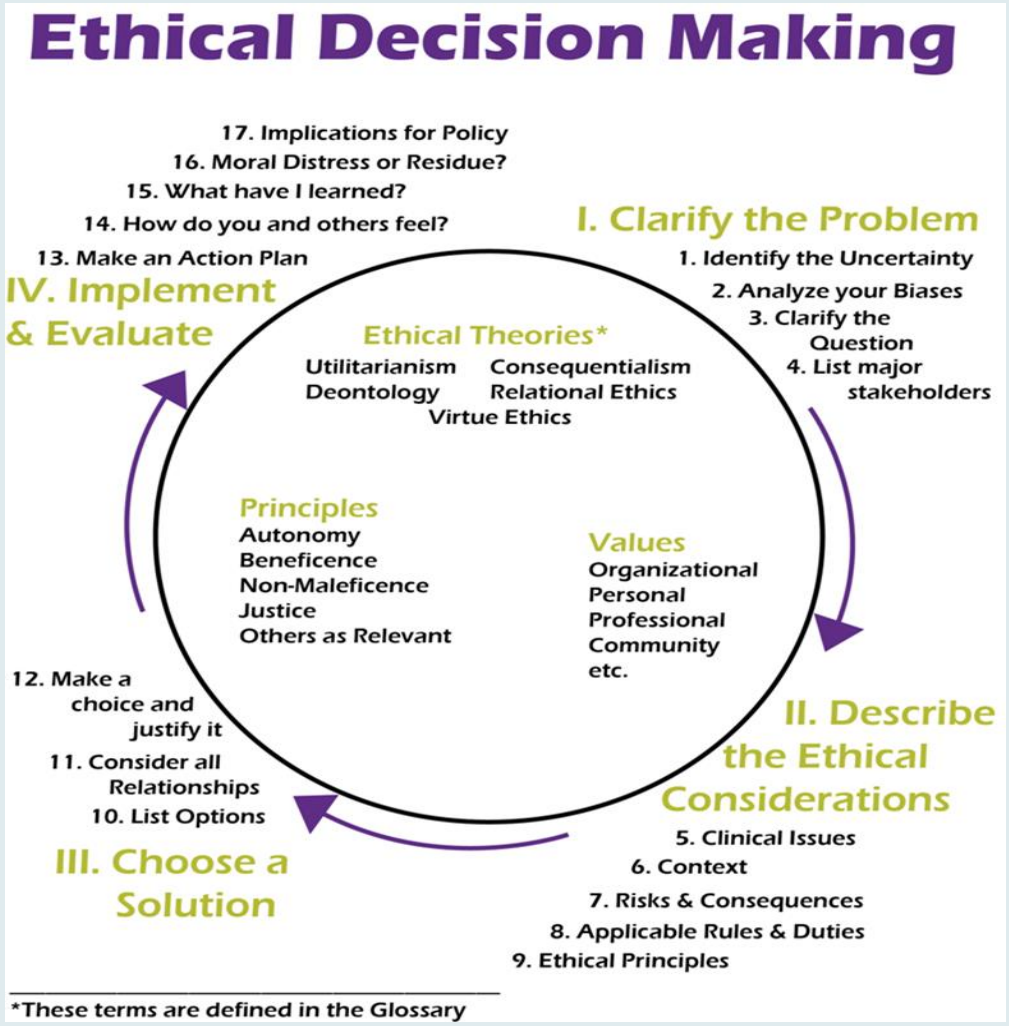
A 4- Step Framework



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Why Use a Framework?

- Its intended to help people have effective conversations to find ethical options to difficult problems.

- Determining what should be done can be challenging. This is where ethics, a systematic method for reviewing options, can be of use.

- An ethics informed process helps us determine which is a better option and **it provides a basis for explaining our decisions to others.**

Ethics Resource Algorithm

#1 Conflict is identified by a staff member or client/family

Describe the conflict. What is the nature of the problem?

- Communication problem
- Values conflict
- Disagreement on goals of care or therapeutic options
- True dilemma: must choose between more than one good (or bad) option
- Not really sure!

This may be an ethical issue

- Personality conflict
- Legal issue
- Therapeutic failure

Refer to appropriate department (e.g. HR, legal, Nursing Practice Council, Allied Health Council, Health Outreach, Union)

Review case with those involved, a trusted colleague or supervisor. Did this solve the issue?

Yes

No or N/A

Review case using your region's ethical decision-making framework. Did this solve the issue?

Yes

No or N/A

Resolved: identify learning opportunities and an appropriate forum for sharing learning.

Speak with your regional Ethics Contact. An Ethics Issue Review may be appropriate.

(MB-PHEN 2013 (Updated 2015)

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Clarifying the problem

1. Uncertainty • What is the main problem?

2. Biases• What assumptions are you making?

3. The Question• What, specifically, do you need to decide? What is still missing?

4. Major Stakeholders• Who will be affected by this decision?

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Describing the Ethical Considerations

5. Clinical Issues • What is the person's condition?

a. Symptoms • How can we best benefit this person and avoid harm?

b. Client Preferences • How can we best respect this person's wishes?

c. Quality of Life • What does this person believe about quality of life?

6. Context • What constraints are you operating with?

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- Autonomy
- Non-maleficence
- Beneficence
- Justice

- CASW Code of Ethics
- Standards of Practice

Choosing Options?

9. Risks and Consequences • What could possibly go wrong?

10. Applicable Rules and Duties • What policies, laws, codes or standards apply?

11. Relationships• How will your options affect relationships?

12. The Best Choice• Test your choices using the Ethical Checklist

• List 2-3 **viable** options

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Checklist

	Ethical Checklist Circle the appropriate answer on the scale: 1 = not at all; 5 = totally yes	1	2	3	4	5
1	Relevant Information Test. Have I/we obtained as much information as possible to make an informed decision & action plan for this situation?					
2	Involvement Test. Have I/we involved all who have a right to have input and/or to be involved in making this decision and action plan?					
3	Consequential Test. Have I/we anticipated and attempted to accommodate for the consequences of this decision and action plan on any who are significantly affected by it?					
4	Fairness Test. If I/we were assigned to take the place of any one of the stakeholders in this situation, would I/we perceive this decision and action plan to be essentially fair, given all of the circumstances?					
5	Enduring Values Test. Does this decision and action plan uphold my/our priority enduring values that are relevant to this situation?					
6	Universality Test. Would I/we want this decision and action plan to become applicable to all similar situations, even to myself/ourselves?					
7	Light-of-Day Test. How would I/we feel and be regarded by others (working associates, family, etc.) if the details of this decision & action plan were disclosed for all to know?					
8	Total Ethical Analysis Confidence Score. Place the total of all numbers here.					

Implementation

13. Develop an Action Plan

- What will you do?
- Who needs to be told?

Evaluation

14. Evaluation • How do you and others feel?

15. Moral Distress • Is there any distress that needs to be followed up?

16. Policy Implications • Does this need to be escalated?

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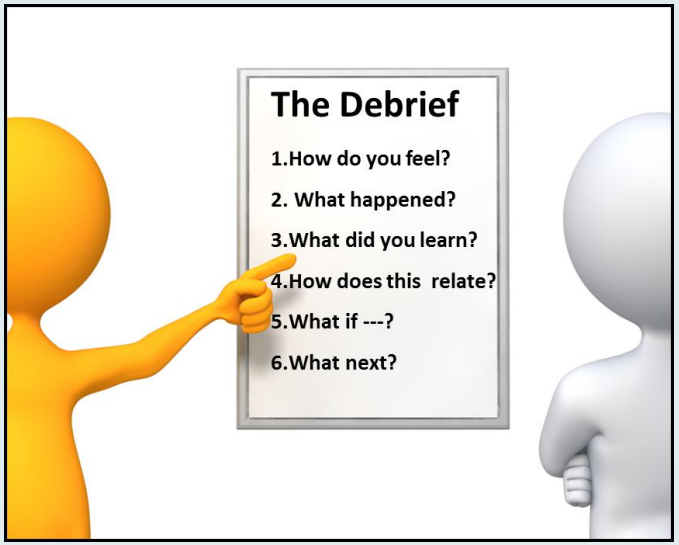
Debrief



1. Describe the situation.
2. Describe the resolution.
3. How do you feel at the end of the process?
4. How does the patient/family, others feel?
5. Are you comfortable with the outcome?
6. Are you confident that others are comfortable ?
7. What have you learned?
8. Did the process and outcome achieve the desired results?
9. Were there any unforeseen consequences?
10. What might you do differently in similar circumstances in the future?
11. Is there any moral distress or residue from the situation that needs to be considered or acted upon?
12. How will you follow up on any outstanding issues?
13. Were any broader policy issues raised during this discussion that warrant further investigation or follow up?
14. What will you do to escalate the issue?

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Moral Distress

The inability to act morally produces negative feelings and which result in attempts to restore emotional stability. This is sometimes done through avoidance, acting out, or other coping mechanisms.

SUMMARY
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Questions & Answers

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