The Ethics Unwrapped “Giving Voice To Values” Video Series

The Giving Voice To Values (GVV) video series summarizes the introductory points of Giving Voice to Values: How To Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right, developed by Mary C. Gentile with support from the Aspen Institute and the Yale School of Management.

The GVV videos can be watched individually or collectively, although they will be most useful if used together and viewed with the introductory video. This series can serve as a springboard for further classroom discussion of ethics and values as they pertain to students’ personal and professional lives.

Although GVV was created for business ethics programs, the lessons in GVV are broad and applicable to a variety of fields including education, fine arts, liberal arts, communication studies, engineering and the sciences, and professional schools. GVV case studies, curriculum and teaching pedagogy are available at http://www.babson.edu/academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/home.aspx

The G.V.V. Approach

Giving Voice to Values (GVV) is an innovative approach to values-driven leadership development. GVV identifies the many ways that individuals can – and do – voice their values in the workplace and provides opportunities to build the “moral muscles” necessary to do so.

Most people want to bring their whole selves to work. Yet, experience and research demonstrate that values conflicts will occur during the course of a person’s life and career – those times when what we believe and want to accomplish seem to be in opposition to the demands of others, including peers, supervisors, organizations, etc. The GVV curriculum helps people build and practice the skills individuals need to recognize, speak and act on their values when these conflicts arise.

GVV identifies and builds upon SEVEN PILLARS or principles that represent ways of thinking about values and our own capabilities and identities in order to enhance our ability to voice and enact our values effectively. The SEVEN PILLARS are: Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations. Each video in this series introduces a GVV PILLAR.
The GVV approach includes:

* A focus on how a leader or manager raises values-based issues in an effective manner—what he/she needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary;

* Positive examples of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace;

* An emphasis upon self-assessment and a focus on individual strengths when looking for a way to align one’s individual sense of purpose with that of the organization;

* Opportunities to construct and practice responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalizations for not acting on one’s values;

* Practice in providing peer feedback and coaching.

**G.V.V. Video: Pillar 5 – Self-Knowledge and Alignment**

Mary Gentile discusses the importance of self-assessment as a way to identify our most effective strategies for enacting our values. Some people may identify as risk-averse or risk-takers, introverts or extroverts, bold or cautious. In each case, it is important to identify strategies for dealing with ethical issues that are true to your own personality.

So, for example, if your boss asks you to “cook the books” and you consider yourself a risk-taker, you might frame your response in terms of sticking your neck out for the sake of integrity and the long-term welfare of the company; on the other hand, if you are risk-averse, you might draw confidence from the idea that this approach is too risky and you are very concerned the company might get caught in an audit and face dire consequences.
Discussion Questions: G.V.V. Pillar 5 – Self-Knowledge and Alignment

1. Consider the following questions:
   - Are you an introvert? An extrovert?
   - Are you a risk-taker? Are you risk-averse?
   - Do you like to work alone or in a team?
   - Do you deal well with conflict or are you non-confrontational?
   - Do you prefer communicating in person or in writing?
   - Do you think best from the gut and in-the-moment, or do you need to take time to reflect and craft your communications?
   - Do you assert your position with statements or do you use questions to communicate?

   The point is that not one of these styles is right or wrong, but knowing how you are most comfortable and effective functioning can help you to build on those strengths.

2. Imagine that you discover that the physical safety of employees at your organization is being compromised for the sake of cost-cutting measures, or that friends in your student club are skimming funds from the bank account. What are some strategies you might take in response if you are an introvert? What if you are an extrovert?

3. In general, can you identify some strategies that are easier or more likely to be effective for a bold person to take when confronting values conflicts? What about for a more cautious person?

4. Can you think of times when you have effectively voiced/enacted your values because you were acting in a way that was natural to you? And/or have you observed this in a friend or co-worker/classmate?
Additional G.V.V. Resources

http://www.givingvoicetovaluesthebook.com/

For a discussion of the “Self-Knowledge & Alignment” pillar, see Chapter Six of *Giving Voice To Values*, “Playing to My Strengths: Self-Knowledge, Self-Image, and Alignment.”

For a discussion of the “GVV Starting Assumptions,” see Chapter One of *Giving Voice to Values*, “Giving Voice to Our Values: The Thought Experiment.”

For a summary of the Giving Voice To Values Seven Pillars download *An Action Framework for Giving Voice To Values—“The To-Do List.”*
http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx

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Transcript of Narration

Written and Narrated by Mary C. Gentile

Sometimes we tend to think that only a certain type of person can act on their values. We may think they have to be bold, assertive, risk-takers, maybe extroverts – and perhaps they need to relish and perform well in a good argument.

The problem with this assumption is that it can imply that if we see ourselves as cautious, conservative, risk-averse or introverted, we might conclude that we will never be able to voice and act on our values. Perhaps we just think that we lack the kind of “moral courage” that would be required.

However, in our research, we have noticed that all types of people can and have acted on their values effectively – extroverts and introverts, risk-takers and the risk-averse, bold and cautious alike. The key similarity is that these folks understood who they truly were: what was most comfortable to them and what their abilities were, and they framed the values conflicts they faced in such a way as to play to their own strengths.
So for example, if we see ourselves as risk takers, we might say “Why not take a risk in the service of something that really matters to me? In the service of my deepest values?” On the other hand, if we see ourselves as risk-averse, we might frame the challenge we face in such a way that acting ethically feels like the safer route.

If we are quick on our feet and clever with words, we might be most effective in a one-on-one conversation with the person we want to influence. If we are shy and need time to think and craft our words in advance, we might be more effective with a written memo. Or perhaps we may generate a set of critical questions that will enable others to bring new and important information into the debate.

This is our “self-story” and it can be a source of inspiration, confidence and guidance in our efforts to find effective ways to act ethically. The point is there are many ways to voice and act on our values and there is always something we can try. It becomes important to reflect on who we are, who we truly want to be, and how and when we are most effective – and then to play to those strengths and understandings when faced with ethical dilemmas.

There are many ways to align our unique strengths and style with our values. The trick is to find a way to “be ourselves” as opposed to trying to impose an unfamiliar or uncomfortable identity on ourselves when facing ethical challenges.

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This material is based upon the Giving Voice To Values curriculum (www.GivingVoiceToValues.org). The Aspen Institute was founding partner, along with the Yale School of Management, and incubator for Giving Voice To Values (GVV). Now based and supported at Babson College.

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