

GVV Pillar 3: Normalization

GVV Pillar 3: Normalization introduces the third principle of “Giving Voice to Values” (GVV). By expecting values conflicts to be a normal part of our lives, we can approach them calmly and competently. Over-reaction to values conflicts can limit our choices unnecessarily. Indeed, it is possible to deal with values conflicts more skillfully and more confidently by recognizing in advance that such conflicts are a regular part of our professional and personal lives. We make values conflicts easier to resolve in a productive and professional way, even if we are concerned about possible impacts on our job or an important relationship, by rehearsing difficult situations or conversations and knowing that they are an everyday part of working and living.

To learn more about values systems and how they vary from culture to culture, watch *Fundamental Moral Unit* and *All is Not Relative*. For complimentary approaches to GVV that also offer methods for voicing values and making ethical decisions, watch the four-part *Being Your Best Self* videos, which include *Part 1: Moral Awareness*, *Part 2: Moral Decision Making*, *Part 3: Moral Intent*, and *Part 4: Moral Action*. To learn about pervasive social and organizational biases that inhibit voicing values, watch *Moral Muteness* and *Moral Myopia*. To discover how voicing values can contribute to professional and personal success, watch *Moral Imagination*.

The case studies on this page illustrate different ways in which individuals or groups give voice to their values. “Pao & Gender Bias” examines the debate Ellen Pao generated in the venture capital and tech industries when she filed a lawsuit against her employer on grounds of gender discrimination. “Freedom of Speech on Campus” explores how, in the wake of racially motivated offenses at Yale and the University of Missouri, student protesters voiced their values and sparked debate over the roles of free speech, deliberation, and tolerance on campus. “Defending Freedom of Tweets?” takes a look at the backlash Pittsburgh Steelers running back Rashard Mendenhall received from fans after he tweeted a criticism of the celebration of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. “Full Disclosure: Manipulating Donors” examines the difficult position a student intern was in and how she struggled to voice her values.

Terms related to this video and defined in our ethics glossary include: behavioral ethics, bounded ethicality, conflict of interest, fundamental attribution error, groupthink, in-group/out-group, moral absolutism, moral emotions, moral reasoning, moral relativism, self-serving bias, utilitarianism, veil of ignorance.

The GVV Approach

The “Giving Voice to Values” (GVV) video series summarizes the key points of *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right*, written by Mary Gentile with support from the Yale School of



Management and the Aspen Institute. The GVV videos may be watched individually or sequentially. The series will be most useful if viewed in its entirety and with the introductory video.

GVV was created for business ethics programs, but its lessons are broad and apply to all professionals in every field including fine arts, liberal arts, communication studies, social and natural sciences, engineering, education, social work, and medicine. The GVV series can serve as a springboard for further discussion of ethics and values as they pertain to individuals' professional and personal lives.

GVV identifies the many ways that individuals can – and do – voice their values in the workplace. It teaches people how to build the “moral muscles” necessary to do so, and details the strategies people can use to find the motivation, skill, and confidence to “give voice to their values.”

The goal of GVV is to act consistently with our most deeply held convictions about right and wrong. Research and experience demonstrate that values conflicts will inevitably occur in our professional and personal lives. So, when what we believe and want to accomplish seems to be in opposition to the demands of others (peers, supervisors, organizations, etc.), the ability to successfully voice our values and navigate these differences is crucial. This is the starting point for the GVV curriculum.

GVV consists of seven principles, or pillars, that represent ways of thinking about values, our identity, and our own capabilities. The seven pillars of GVV are: *Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations*. Each video in the GVV series introduces and explains one of the GVV pillars.

Gentile also describes the factors that affect ethical behavior and offers techniques for resisting unethical actions. Ultimately, the curriculum helps people build and practice the skills they need to recognize, speak, and act on their values effectively when conflicts arise.

The GVV approach includes:

- How a leader raises values-based issues in an effective manner – what she/he needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary.
- An emphasis on self-assessment and a focus on individual strengths when looking for a way to align one's individual sense of purpose with that of an organization.
- Opportunities to construct and practice responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalizations for not acting on one's values.
- Positive examples of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace.
- Practice in providing peer feedback and coaching.

Discussion questions: GVV Pillar 3: Normalization

1. BEFORE viewing the video, you may wish to poll students with the following questions:

When it comes to values conflicts, they are often unexpected and catch me by surprise.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Not Sure Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

They get in the way of getting my real work done.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Not Sure Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

They are everyday occurrences and they don't bother me much because I know how to handle them.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Not Sure Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

I try to rush through them so I can get back to work, meetings, studying, etc.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Not Sure Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. AFTER viewing the video, you may wish to re-visit the polling questions above and discuss whether participants have any new insights.

3. What are some of the predictable kinds of ethical challenges you face in your daily life (at school, in work, etc.)? By anticipating them, can you reduce some of their emotional power to catch you off guard, and thereby expand your access to real choices and your ability to handle them calmly?

4. Have you ever spent time, before a challenge arises, alone or preferably in collaboration with your peers, trying to figure out how you might effectively enact your own values in such instances?

5. Which are the most frequent and most important of these situations that you encounter. Have you ever seen anyone (or yourself) address them effectively? In small groups, think about how you might effectively act on your values in these situations.

Additional Resources

Giving Voice to Values case studies, curriculum, and additional teaching pedagogy are available at no cost to educators at the [Giving Voice to Values Curriculum](#) website.

Further details about the "Normalization" pillar may be found in Chapter Four of *Giving Voice to Values*, "It's Only Normal."

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

A summary of the seven pillars of GVV may be downloaded here: [An Action Framework for Giving Voice To Values—"The To-Do List."](#)

For further discussion of the GVV approach, see Mary Gentile's article published in *Organization Management Journal*, "[Values-Driven Leadership Development: Where We Have Been and Where We Could Go.](#)"

Gentile, Mary C. (2010). [Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right](#). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Transcript of Narration

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"Too often we tend to think of values conflicts or ethical challenges as aberrations – the exceptional situation that we hope we never have to encounter. This way of thinking can leave us unprepared and overly emotional when the conflict actually presents itself. We might for example just freeze – like a deer in headlights – when someone asks us to lie or cheat; Being unprepared, we are more likely to just give in, with the hope that we don't get caught and never have to face the situation again.

If we recognize that values conflicts are a normal and predictable part of business – and of life – we are more likely to be able to calmly anticipate and prepare ourselves for the kinds of challenges that we are likely to encounter.

The kinds of values conflicts we may face can often be anticipated depending on what we do – work, school, sports, friendships, family, etc. At school, we might be asked to cheat. On a sports team, we may be pressured to cover up the rule violations of a fellow teammate. In business, we may be pressured to tamper with the financial reports or to lie about a product's true capabilities; and so on.

The reasons that people use for making unethical requests are pretty predictable and so there is an opportunity to think them through in advance and to consider what might be a credible response. Then we can literally rehearse or practice our response so we feel ready when the situation arises.

Too often we tend to assume that ethical conflicts require us to stamp our foot and shake our fist and "speak truth to power" in an emotional or even accusatory way. But actually, if we can remain calm, avoid over-reaction, and prepare ourselves to make reasonable and helpful responses to these situations, we are more likely to both find the confidence to remain true to our values and also a way to influence others without shaming or blaming them."

For additional information, please contact:

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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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