

Tap Into Your Moral Compass: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas Encountered with Assistive Technology

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Conflict of Interest

- No relevant financial relationship or conflicts of interest to disclose
- Instructor at Concordia University – St Paul in DPT Program
- Adjunct Faculty at University of St Thomas



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Background

- Therapy Claims Consultant BCBS of ND  
– 5/93 through 1/99
- Rehabilitation Director – AXIS Healthcare  
– 9/01 through 5/07
- Adult Rehabilitation: Courage Center, St. Joseph's Hospital and Boutwell's Landing, Presbyterian Homes  
– 1/99 through 5/2018
- Pediatric Rehabilitation: District #287, Stillwater Schools, Courage Center, Children's Hospitals and Clinics  
– 1/87 through 7/16



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Objectives

- Identify types of ethical situations encountered
- Describe a Dialogic/Quadripartite Model for ethical decision-making
- Explore ethical dilemmas commonly encountered in the selection, use, and abandonment of assistive technology (AT)
- Apply the Dialogic/Quadripartite Model to analyze possible solutions for AT ethical dilemmas

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Ethical Situations  
(Swisher, 2005)

Table 1 Types of Ethical Situations

Situation	
Issue / problem <sup>1</sup>	Important values are present or may be challenged.
Dilemma <sup>1</sup>	Two alternative courses of action may be taken, both of which fulfill an important duty, and it is not possible to fulfill both obligations. Kidder <sup>21</sup> describes this as a "right versus right" decision.
Distress <sup>1</sup>	You know the right course of action but are not authorized or empowered to perform it. Note that ethical distress may present as a later "complication" of any of the ethical situations. Ethical distress is often identified during the implementation phase of decision-making.
Temptation <sup>21</sup>	Involves a choice between a "right" and a "wrong," and in which you may stand to benefit from doing the wrong thing. Kidder describes this as a "right versus wrong" situation.
Silence	Ethical values are challenged, but no one is speaking about this challenge to values. This may actually be the course taken by an individual who is experiencing moral distress.




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Discussion Between Professionals

- What is the most recent ethical problem you encountered?
- What type of ethical situation would it be?




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The Need for a Theoretical Framework

- Drolet and Hu... professionalism,
- Literature rev... physical ther...
- Found 39 arti... frameworks used
- Literature ana... or model
- 95% (37/39) r... guidelines and documents



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Dialogic Engagement Model (DEM) (Swisher, 2018)  
 Quadripartite Ethical Tool (QET) (Drolet, 2015)

<p><b>Rule-Based Tradition</b>  <i>(Kant)</i>                  Duty to respect autonomy                  Human Rights                  Laws, Code of Ethics</p>	<p><b>Ends-Based Tradition</b>                  Utilitarianism  <i>(Mill &amp; Bentham)</i>                  Most good for most people                  Maximize good consequences</p>
<p><b>Virtue-Based Tradition</b>  <i>(Aristotle)</i>                  Virtues                  Core Values                  Professional Identity                  Moral Character</p>	<p><b>Narrative/Care-Based Tradition</b>  <i>(Newton &amp; Gilligan)</i>                  Voice and Story                  Life Experience                  Empathy &amp; Altruism</p>

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Rule-based Tradition

- Based on the work of Immanuel Kant
- Humans have the capacity for rationality
- Emotions, personal desires, and intention should not play a role in moral judgment
- Needs a moral framework of rational rules
  - Rules guide action
  - Prevent actions
  - Consequences are not important
- Depends on predefined sets of rules and policies



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### Guiding Documents

Documents that guide integrating personal values with professionalism are:

- State Practice Acts
- Code of Ethics
- Core Values of Professionalism
- RESNA Code of Ethics

[https://www.resna.org/sites/default/files/legacy/certification/RESNA\\_Code\\_of\\_Ethics.pdf](https://www.resna.org/sites/default/files/legacy/certification/RESNA_Code_of_Ethics.pdf)




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### Virtue-based Tradition

- Based on the work of Aristotle
- We possess certain values and virtues and act in ways that exhibit them
- A quest to live a life of moral character
  - A balance between extremes
- Morality developed through practice and habits
- Will make the right choice when faced with ethical challenges




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### Ends-based Tradition

- Based on the work of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill
- Uses the principle of 'utility' – something that has intrinsic value (good)
- Moral decisions are made for the consequences of an action
  - Takes into account the interests of others
- Most good for the most people
- Who determines the definition of good?




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The Trolley Problem – Good Place



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f10W23100I>

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### Narrative-based Tradition

- Based on the work of Carol Gilligan and Adam Zachary Newton
- Focuses on personal identity through storytelling
- Uses the practices of listening and empathy as careful witness to understanding and evaluating the unique circumstances of particular lives and as they apply to the wider moral contexts



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### Ethical Analysis Process Using DEM

- Read the scenario and use the following process for analysis:
- **Step 1: First Impression.** Examine your first reaction to the ethical situation
  - **Step 2: Stakeholder List.** Make a list of all individuals or groups involved
  - **Step 3: Frame Exploration.** Place the scenario into each frame and ask the following questions:
    - How does the frame apply to the current situation?
    - Which stakeholder(s) saw the situation from this lens, and why?
    - What decision did the stakeholder(s) make about the situation?
  - **Step 4: Revisit First Impression.** Did walking through the four frames change your first reaction?
  - **Step 5: Solution.** Propose the solution closest to “win-win”

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### Putting It Together in Practice

The case involves a woman (mid-late 30s) who has ALS. She was provided with an AAC device for communication. The woman used her assistive technology system to indicate two things: "I would rather choke on a piece of good steak than have a GI tube" and "I do not want to be put on a mechanical ventilator at any time." She made the second request from a position of having worked as a volunteer with persons suffering from ALS and with the knowledge that the end stage of the disease results in the inability to breathe independently.

- At first impression you believe the patient needs a ventilator and GI Tube.
- How would you honor her wishes and still respect your own values and belief system?
- Use DEM to analyze this scenario.

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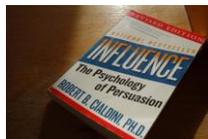
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### Ethical Issues at Assessment (Scherer, 2014)

- Consumers have the right to choose
- Technology should adapt to user needs not vice versa
- Discuss differing perspectives and priorities openly
- Professionals should not impose on selection
- Cost should not be the deciding factor




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