

Code of Conduct

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Howard & Korver (2008), in their book *Ethics for the Real World*, suggested, “Unless we develop ethical reasoning skills, we get comfortable with transgressions” (p. 2) and further argued people often make ethical decisions reflexively and tend to rationalize and numb themselves to objections and transgressions (p. 3). Their solution, which forms the bulk of the book, is to purposefully commit to a clear personal code of ethics (Howard & Korver, 2008, p. 7) that will guide us and remind us of where we stand and why.

For me, the expression of reactionary and auto-pilot ethics resonated, as I have always leaned on my basis of faith for my ethics and prior to the DEL had not specifically thought through my code of ethics. And while my faith certainly informs my ethics, there is much more to it than simply an amorphous and vague sense of right and wrong. I have always said there is something about writing ideas down that helps to formalize our thinking, and I am grateful for this exercise to help me formulate my code of ethics.

Protect People. One of my mentors encouraged me to read *The Road Back to You* (Cron, 2016), which details personality based on childhood experiences and using a number system. On this Enneagram system, I am an Eight, which is the Challenger personality, and as an Eight my personal code includes defending and speaking up for those who cannot do so for themselves. Advocacy in that nature is extremely important to me and ties in with my ideas of integrity.

Integrity. For me, my word needs to mean something. I will always tell people the truth no matter the consequences to me, and I strive to act in accordance with what I say I believe.

This often plays out in giving honest feedback no matter if I am speaking to a friend, superior, colleague, or family member. It is also freeing in that I never have to remember how to act but simply am consistent with who I am. I learned a hard lesson over the last few years through a difficult work experience. I learned that it's not my job to protect my reputation; it's my job to be who I am. This feels like integrity to me.

Win-Win. Another aspect of my code that is embedded in my leadership is to continually show up for people. By making sure my actions follow and flow with my words and statements and by living my truth, I make space for others to do the same – to be authentic, to have failings, and to be vulnerable. This not only creates space for both parties but also leaves room to create win-win situations (Covey, 2004) and to care for others as I lead.

Valuing People. People are our greatest asset and the reason we are leaders in the first place. Ethical leadership includes valuing and including all **stakeholders**, helping people understand and accept decisions, and placing value on **diversity**. In other words, ethical leadership for me legitimizes people's voices, opinions, and emotions and places people first before outcomes, goals, processes, and timelines.

Let People Shine. Years ago, I was organizing one of my first Leadership Breakfasts, an event that brings community leaders together to learn and discuss leadership concepts while networking with likeminded professionals. As I thought through the logistics of who should welcome the crowd and moderate the discussion, a phrase came to me – *Let Others Shine* – so I did. For those first few Breakfasts, I placed colleagues in the most prominent positions and allowed their talents to help build the event into something valued in our community. Later, I realized I could shine, too, and started moderating the Breakfasts, but I never lost that lesson to

let others shine. Even in my role of moderating, I always focused on the speaker of panelists and found ways for them to share their expertise and personality with our community.

This lesson above all others has stuck with me as the guiding principle of my code of ethics. If I focus on others – protecting them, interacting in integrity and making space for their authenticity, finding the win-win, and valuing all voices – I will fall on the side of right and impact my sphere of influence as an ethical leader.

References

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Cron, I. M. (2016). *The road back to you: An Enneagram journey to self-discovery*. IVP Books / InterVarsity Press.

Howard, R. A., & Korver, C. D. (2008). *Ethics for the real world: Creating a personal code to guide decisions in work and life*. Harvard Business Press.