Moral Courage
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“To be good is noble, but to teach others to be good is nobler and less trouble”
Mark Twain

Plan for the Session: Moral Courage
• Introductions and overview
• Identifying situations that demand/ed moral courage
• Understanding moral courage
• Barriers to action
• Resources and exemplars: “Profiles in courage”
• Steps and strategies
• Case applications
• Wrap-up
Books Available for Purchase
20% Conference Discount

What Were They Thinking?
Doing Wrong or Not Doing Right

- William Aramony
- Enron Board of Directors
- Cardinal Bernard Law
- Richard Foster
- “32 Minutes/38 People”

Courage!

- “The defense of the intangible”
- Without it, what are any other virtues worth?
- “...a perfect sensibility of the measure of danger and the mental willingness to endure it”
- “Courage is being scared to death—and saddling up anyway”
- “The hard right against the easy wrong”
**Acting on Ethics – Moral Courage**

- “To stand up against the unfair, the disrespectful, the irresponsible, the dishonest, and the uncompassionate demands moral courage” (IGE)
- “It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends” (Dumbledore, in Rowling)
- Be an effective agent of change using SW knowledge. 3As – Assess, Ally, Act

**Moral Courage - Kidder**

- A readiness to endure danger for the sake of principle
- Three elements
  - Action based on core values
  - Awareness of the risks
  - Willingness to endure necessary hardship

**Moral Courage**

The capacity to overcome the fear of shame and humiliation in order to admit one’s mistakes, to confess a wrong, to reject evil conformity, to renounce injustice, and also to defy immoral or imprudent orders.

William Ian Miller
Moral Courage vs. Physical Courage

“Too great a distinction is made between moral courage and physical courage. They are in many instances the same. For either to be authentic, it must encounter fear” (real threat) “and prove itself superior to that fear.” John McCain

Ethical Action or Reaction?
Challenges to Doing the Right Thing

- Lack of awareness
- Relativism
- Discomfort
- Fear of exposure
- Sense of futility
- “Groomed for submission”
- Confusion/complexity
- Complacency/Apathy
- Personal cost
- Bystander effect

Moral Courage: Why and How?

- Personal growth and satisfaction
- To avoid the corrosive effects of doing otherwise
- To create a better culture
- To inspire courage in others

- Understand what courage is and where it is needed
- Select and study moral heroes
- Act with fairness, respect, responsibility, honesty, and compassion

Qualities for Courage

- Inspiration of remorse
- Independence of thought
- Quiet assurance
- Greater confidence in principles than personalities
- Faith
- Deferred gratification
- Tolerance for ambiguity and exposure
- Formidable persistence
- Strength narrative
Qualities for Courage

- Inspiration of remorse
- Independence of thought
- Quiet assurance
- Ethical fitness (practiced courage)
- Greater confidence in principles than personalities
- Conscience and sense of duty
- Powerful outrage
- Faith
- Deferred gratification
- Tolerance for ambiguity and exposure
- Formidable persistence
- Strength narrative

“Whistleblowing”

- Not just a personal but professional responsibility
- Protection of vulnerable persons is primary
- Use chain of command, documentation, seek coalitions
- Focus on larger picture of organizational liability
- Option of “voting with one’s feet”
- Legal protections available
  - False Claims Act
  - Reprisal prohibited in U.S. Code
  - NASW Legal Defense Fund
  - NASW Review of “Professional Actions”
The Importance of Exemplars

- “Nothing is so contagious as an example. We never do great good or great evil without bringing about more of the same on the part of others.” —La Rochefoucauld
- “The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in time of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality” — Dante
- “Be not too hasty… to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality; they discourse like angels, but they live like men” — Samuel Johnson
Exemplar I: Unsung Individuals

• Nisha Sharma
• Hugh C. Thompson, Jr.
• Joseph Darby
• Jennifer Bier
• Peter Buxtun

Is it ever too late to do the right thing?

• Robert McNamara
• Mary Tudor
• The Schwarzenegger sixteen
• Eugenics apologies, 5/32

The Wrong Way to the Right Thing?

• Sherron Watkins
• Paul O’Neill
• Nat Heatwole
Rest’s Four Components of Moral Action

• Moral sensitivity to rights and needs of others in a given situation
• Appeal to principles in reasoning about what to do
• Make a commitment to do what s/he has concluded ought to be done. Resolve not to let non-moral concerns impede action
• Identify way to proceed and skills needed

Core Ethical Standards

• Self-Determination /Autonomy
• Informed Consent
• Professional Competence
• Conflicts of Interest
• Dual and Sexual Relationships
• Privacy and Confidentiality
• Supervision
• Nondiscrimination
• Professionalism

“Evil prevails when good men do nothing, but evil is defeated when people of courage and good will stand up for what is right, regardless of the consequences”.
There is no softer pillow than a clear conscience.