

*Speak your Truth*  
**Moral Tensions During Pandemic Times**

**Ethics Café**

29 June 2020, 14:00 to 15:30

an initiative of



**SOPHIA TOWN**  
**Community Psychological Services**

Ethics Cafe 29 June 2020

## About today's Ethics Café process



This is our first virtual Ethics Café! Your host will introduce the topic and invite you to participate in discussion. As the discussion progresses, you will be asked to do some thinking on your own, using statements and questions given to you, as prompts.

Through the Ethics Café process, we enter into ‘ethics territory’, to become more aware of our moral tensions during these pandemic times. We aim to be able to name the tensions and to describe them. We also hope to become clearer about various arguments that support, as well as challenge, the positions that we may take.

As the Ethics Café process unfolds today, be reminded that we talk about real experiences that involve real people. Therefore, let's be generous in arguing, and be prepared to change our minds.



## **Moral Tensions during Pandemic Times**

## **Ethics Café topic**

Living under pandemic conditions gives all of us so much opportunity to be 'human', to be part of humanity in ways that transcend historical man-made barriers. However, these times also highlight moral tensions, for example about:

- our duty of care in tension with our self-preservation inclinations,
- being called to comply to requirements that do not seem fair,
- harm to dignity in the face of the psychosocial and economic impact of the pandemic.

During this Ethics Café, we will consider ways in which to become more clear about and speak about our moral tensions. Ideas will also be shared about how to invite such conversation within organisations.

# History

## Circumstances / Events



Society:

world wide, South Africa

Community:

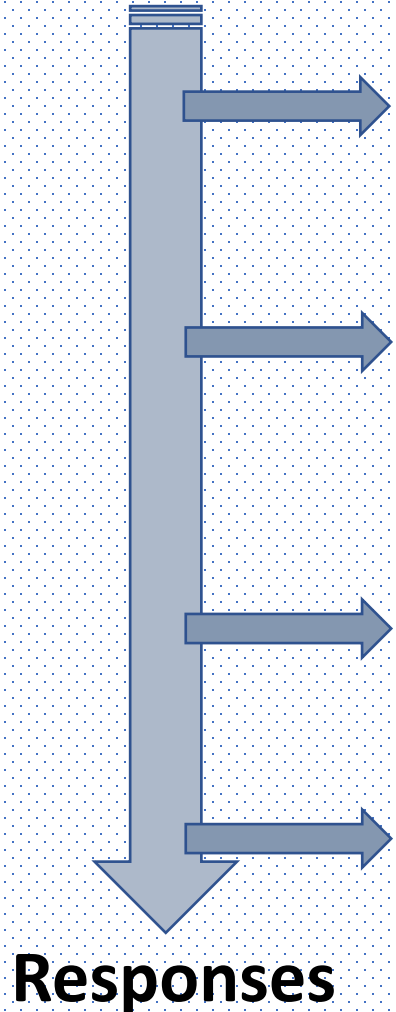
neighbourhoods, schools, places of worship,  
workplaces

Family:

immediate, extended

Individual:

authentic self, roles



# Responses

- ... to protect
- ... to prevent
- ... to assist
- ... to heal



## 'RIGHT ACTION'

is practical and, if we look deeper, we can see that the ACTION taken is typically rooted in moral motivations. Questions asked about what we should do, talk to what would be RIGHT under the circumstances.

# History in the making, and COVID-19

Pandemic

Worldwide impact

Highlighting what is wrong and right in the world

In 'ethics territory':

pleasant surprises, shows of courage,  
challenge, unease, distress.

# COVID-19 and South Africa

**SA lockdown: Soldiers accused of beating Alexandra man to death with sjambok**

By Piet Rampedi, Karabo Ngoepe and Manyane Manyane  
Apr 12, 2020  
Sunday Independent

**Screw the poor? How deep is our commitment to equality?**

By Mark Heywood  
6 May 2020  
MAVERICK CITIZEN EDITORIAL

**Dis-Chem argues it acted within the law in hiking mask prices**

BY KATHARINE CHILD  
10 MAY 2020  
BUSINESS DAY

Edwin Cameron | **A visit to 'Sun City' prison: Nightmare to manage the virus in confined spaces**

14 May 2020  
news24

**This Family Initiative Is Helping Feed 300 Households Hit by COVID-19 in Johannesburg**

By Lerato Mogoathe  
APRIL 16, 2020  
GLOBAL CITIZEN



How do we  
decide what  
**RIGHT ACTION**  
might be

We have an 'ordinary moral sense' that alerts us.

Our moral sense intuitively points our attention to:

- what matters,
- what kind of persons we should be,
- our duties, responsibilities and rights/claims,
- awareness that some actions give better results than others.



# Reflection

Intuition during this pandemic time about ...

- what matters,
- what kind of persons we should be,
- our duties, responsibilities and rights/claims,
- an awareness that some actions give better results than others.

# Discussion

Intuition about what is clearly right and wrong.

Dilemmas:

- Options
- Choices
- Not one clear 'solution'
- Weigh up
- Justify choice



# Discussion continued

Engage with tensions:

- examine explanations/reasons that justify different positions, the premises of each argument
- consider the grounds each of the positions rest on, for example:
  - what matters (what has value, what is a better state of affairs)
  - what kind of persons we should be (Character and Virtue Ethics)
  - our duties, responsibilities and rights/claims (Human Rights, Ubuntu Ethics, Kantian Ethics)
  - awareness that some actions give better results than others (Consequentialism).

# Practice suggestions

Simultaneously focus on two tracks  
running alongside each other:

Engaging with the 'content'  
of the moral/ethics matter.



Creating a safe, respectful,  
non-judgemental space  
to share our human experience of  
engaging with moral tensions





## -Related Process Practice Suggestions

Witness, be present.

Pay attention to moral intuition (moral delight, unease, distress)

Understand (name, describe) moral tension (what is clearly right/wrong as well as dilemmas)

Examine reasons to justify/object to various arguments



How to encourage such a process within your organisation.

# Engaging with 'Human Experience' of Moral Tensions Practice Suggestions

Conscious openness to and respect for individual and collective truths.

Self Care as an essential discipline to maintain well-being.

Encourage Solidarity Care (refer to Myisha Cherry article).

Practice compassionate leadership.

Work at maturing ethics approach/culture in service of moral progress (refer to Ethics Office Handbook, TEI, resource).



How to encourage such a process within your organisation.

# Closing

# References and Resources

Article referred to in the Ethics Café: Cherry, Myisha (2020). Solidarity Care: How to Take Care of Each Other in Times of Struggle. *Public Philosophy Journal* 3 (1):12.

You may also wish to read/watch:

*THE ETHICS OFFICE HANDBOOK* (2018). Edited by Prof Leon van Vuuren, TEI, Pretoria. Available at:  
<https://www.tei.org.za/index.php/resources/handbooks-and-toolkits>

Maureen Sander-Staudt. “Care Ethics” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. December 27, 2019. Available at:  
<https://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>

Prof Michael Sandel lectures about various moral viewpoints and discussion of moral dilemmas. Available at:  
<http://justiceharvard.org/>

PHILO-notes Whiteboard Edition

What Are Moral Dilemmas? - General Ethics - PHILO-notes Whiteboard Edition

UJ Coronavirus Impact Survey Summary Findings 20 April 2020 Available at:  
<https://www.uj.ac.za/newandevents/Documents/UJ%20HSRC%20summary%20report%20v1.pdf>