

Speaking Truth To Power

Ethics Café 25 July 2022



SOPHIA TOWN
Community Psychological Services

To notice and be affected by wrongdoing of others is to be confronted with choice: speak up, resist, adapt, keep quiet, ignore, pretend, leave. We are challenged similarly when systems and institutions perpetuate injustice. Deciding what to do is informed by our moral consciousness and integrity, our belief in what is important and has value, our sense of duty, anticipated consequences of our decisions, our sense of agency, and whether we are alone or part of a collective that shares our sentiments. All the while, we may feel angry, upset, anxious, ambivalent, at times righteous.

This is a complex process.

During our Ethics Café, we will unpack the idea of *speaking truth to power*, working with our own everyday experiences and dilemmas. We will try to gain more insight into:

- the factors that affect our 'speaking' out about things that are wrong,
- what 'truth' actually means: whose truth about what, and
- what makes up 'power' and rank.

Real life example ...

Describe a situation where someone **behaved** in a way that you consider to be **morally wrong**.

Be specific about what you consider to be wrong about their behaviour.

How do you **feel** about the situation?

What is/was **your reaction** to the situation?

Why do you think you are **relating this situation now**?

Real life example ...

Observer's account	Exact issue	Your feelings	Your reaction	What lingers for you?

Typical feelings

Anger

Upset

Fear

Anxiety

Ambivalence

Guilt

Righteousness

Superiority



“You know what you know”

The
concept
of
choice

Options

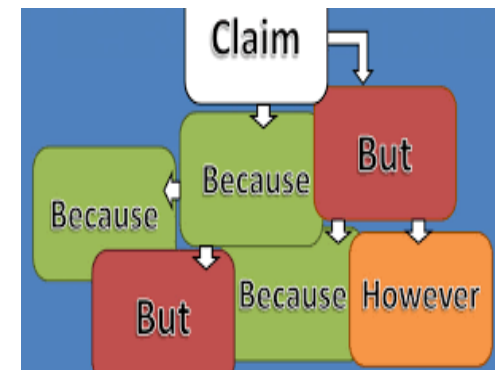
Avoid the person/discussion

Ignore: turn a blind eye, pretend nothing happened

Resist: try to make a statement indirectly
Judge, typically through “othering”

Speak up

Leave



Factors that affect our reactions & choices

Personal and workplace character

Our integrity

Our moral courage

How we identify with and see our duty

Anticipated consequences various reactions may have

Perceived/Actual Risk

Integrity



Integrity can be understood as:

- A characteristic
- A values compass
- Standing for something
- A measure for action, of outcome

CourageMoral

Directly quoted from: **Speak Truth To Power: Kerry Kennedy**
at TEDxLecce Dec 22, 2013
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHIscQcJXkA>

Courage has 2 parts:

1. BRAVERY:

- Fear
- Overcoming

2. COMPASSION:

Caring about others,
overcoming fear to help others

3 Types of courage:

1. Minority standing up to majority
2. Courage without borders
3. Moral courage

Stand-up muscle ----- Go-along muscle

Duty

Responsibility of speaker

Responsibility of listener

Role responsibility

Duty to protect

Duty to warn

In addition, the principles of the Rotary 4-Way Test may be helpful here. It is available at:

<https://rotary5630.org/history-of-the-four-way-test/>

Truth



? Commonly agreed on observations



? Lessons from experience



? Realities of 'nature'



? Moral truths

*Can there be more
than one truth about
the same thing?*

Power & Rank

Sources

Position (hierarchical power)

Status

Relationship

Transactional power

Coercive power

Expert power

WHAT IMAGE COMES TO MIND
FOR YOU ABOUT POWER AND
RANK?



Relevant resource

<https://whistleblowerhouse.org/>

“The Whistleblower House, a **registered NPC (2021/717060/08)**, is a not for profit, public benefit organisation that facilitates access to support services for whistleblowers, creates awareness of whistleblowers’ plight, and acknowledges the vital role of whistleblowers in strengthening ethics and democracy in South Africa”.

Closing



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