



MORAL DILEMMAS



7-11



All, in groups of
4-6



WHAT IS RELEVANT?



30-60 minutes



This activity fosters moral development and stimulates different way of thinking ethically. The activity helps children to develop and broaden moral sensitivity for situations, to get different perspectives and to engage skills of decision making. It encourages children to be aware of the complexity of the process of moral decision making. It goes from recognizing various moral dimensions in a more implicit way to a more explicit awareness of them.



A selection of short stories or examples of moral dilemmas (these could be everyday situations in which we face a challenge to make a moral decision. Pieces of paper (A5) in various colors with a selection of keywords written on them (DUTY, RIGHT, COMMON GOOD, HARM, RESPECT, JUSTICE, CARE, PERSONAL CHARACTER (VIRTUE), ...) + a bag or a basket to put the sheets of paper into.



1. Divide the classroom into several smaller groups of children (ranging between 4 to 6 members in each group).

2. Bring forward pieces of paper with various key moral concepts written on them (e.g. DUTY, RIGHT, COMMON GOOD, HARM, RESPECT, JUSTICE, CARE, PERSONAL CHARACTER (VIRTUE). You can add your own concepts or even use some more simple and easy to grasp terms like ME, OTHERS, COMMUNITY, PLANET EARTH etc.). Put them all in a bag or basket. Each group of children should then select one piece of paper at random and after each group selects it one of the members of this group read the word out loud (beginning with group 1, and then moving to other groups). The facilitator then discusses the word with the entire class (what does it mean, when do we use it, what does it apply to, etc.). Next, move to the next group and do the same; discuss the concept until it is at least somewhat clear to children. When all the groups have their concepts and when you have discussed them all, you can move to the next step.

3. Now present the entire class with a short story that contains a moral dilemma or difficult moral decision and end the story at the time when this decision has to be made (you can use fairy tales, stories, everyday life examples, short stories that children know, stories from cartoons, etc. E.g. an everyday life example: Tom buys a charity newspaper from a homeless man on the street, which he sells for 1 euro. Tom gives to a homeless man 2 euros because he doesn't have any change and Tom expects to get 1 euro back. The homeless man gives Tom a newspaper and says "Thank you and goodbye." Tom is confused. What should he do? Should he ask for one euro? Should he just forget about it?

4. Now select a group at random and they are then the first that have to put forward or suggest how is the pertinent decision at hand connected to the moral concept that they have on their piece of paper (e.g. how does the decision influence rights of the persons involved, can we cause any harm with how we decide, how it will affect the others in the situation, how it will affect the character faced with the decision and his/her personality, does the decision to act in a given foster respect or care for others, what will produce most good and do the least harm, etc. E.g. in the case of the example above, the concept that the selected group has written on the paper could be JUSTICE and then one of the discussions could be that justice requires that Tom receives 1 euro back, etc.).

The members of the group first have to come out with their own suggestions. Next, other groups can help them with ideas. You can also briefly discuss the answers with the class. After this, move on to another group and another moral concept. Repeat such steps until each group has taken its turn. Remember, the goal is not to find the right solution to the moral problem, but to be aware of the moral complexity of the situation itself and cultivate moral sensitivity for morally relevant aspects of the situation.

5. You can end the activity here or take it a step further. Try thinking with all the groups together which actions are open to the character in the moral dilemma story to follow (try to think of at least 3 or 4 alternatives. E.g. Tom asks for a 1 euro back. Tom just goes away. Tom says to the homeless man: "And I would like you to keep the 1 euro as a gift from me". Tom asks for a second copy of the newspaper.). You write the alternatives on the whiteboard so everybody can see them.

6. In this step, you can discuss what would the best decision in this case be. Is there an optimal solution? Why (or why not)? Engage in a short Socratic dialogue with the group. Again, the goal is not to get everyone to agree, but to think critically about the moral dilemma.

for the designer/optional *** insert pictures of squares of different colours with keywords: DUTY, RIGHT, COMMON GOOD, HARM, RESPECT, JUSTICE, CARE, CHARACTER (VIRTUE) ***