

## Social Issues in Management and Business Ethics: Exercises and Activities

Exercise/Activity Title:

### **Moral Development Partners**

Exercise/Activity Explanation (150 words or less):

After the first class, students are paired with a "Moral Development Partner." During every subsequent class the moral development partners meet for 10 minutes and confidentially discuss how they have experienced one of Erik Erikson's eight "Issues Set Stage".

For instance the first stage is "Trust vs. Mistrust," which is initially experienced during the first two years of life and applied throughout life. Students share answers with their partner to questions such as: When you were a child and teenager, who did you fully trust among your parents, friends, teachers, and leaders? Who do you fully trust at work? When did you stop trusting your parents, friends, teachers, leaders, and people at work? Why? Share personal stories about how your sense of trust or mistrust in others developed as a child and as you have aged, including at work.

Assignment is on the following page.

Optional – Contact Information:

If interested in additional information, please contact Professor Denis Collins, School of Business, Edgewood College, Madison, WI; [dcollins@edgewood.edu](mailto:dcollins@edgewood.edu)

## **Moral Development Partnerships – Reflections and Dialogue**

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Step 1: Pair each student with one partner, factors to consider when creating pair:

- Same gender if possible, e. g. 2 men, 2 women
- Similar age
- Similar amounts of work experience

Step 2: As homework prior to class, students read one of Erik Erickson's Issue Set Stage

Step 3: Set aside 12-15 minutes for class activity [I usually do it the last 15 minutes of class because students end class with a deep experience and the partners may want to continue discussing the question when class ends

- Student meets in class with his/her Moral Development Discussion Partner
- Teacher briefly reviews the Issue Set stage and its importance.
- Teacher reads the Moral Development Partner Question
- First student is given 5 minutes to explain his/her answer to the Moral Development Partner Question
  - No interruption during the five minutes (practice skillful listening)
- Second student is given 5 minutes to explain his/her answer to the Moral Development Partner Question

## Erik Erikson's 8 Stage Issue Sets Moral Development Partner Questions

- 1) Trust vs. Mistrust (ages 0-2): Individuals need to determine who can be trusted and not trusted. Appropriate trust leads to a sense of security while mistrust leads to fearing others.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* When you were a child and teenager, who did you fully trust among your parents, friends, teachers, and leaders? Who do you fully trust at work? When did you stop trusting your parents, friends, teachers, leaders, and people at work? Why? Share personal stories about how your sense of trust or mistrust in others developed as a child and as you have aged, including at work.

- 2) Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (ages 2-3): Individuals need to assert their own desires and master skills to be self-sufficient. Success leads to feelings of autonomy and failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* What skills have you mastered during your life? How about at work? What skills would you still like to develop during your life and at work? Why? Share stories about whether you successfully or unsuccessfully mastered skills as a child and as you've aged, including at work.

- 3) Initiative vs. Guilt (ages 4-5): Individuals need to take initiative and accomplish their self-determined desires. Approval from others leads to a sense of individual purpose and disapproval leads to guilt.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* When have you taken initiative to achieve something you strongly desired during your life? How about at work? When haven't you done so during your life and at work? Why? Share personal stories about successfully and unsuccessfully taking initiative to achieve something you strongly desired as a child and as you have aged, including at work.

- 4) Industry vs. Inferiority (ages 6-14): Individuals need to develop abilities. Success leads to a sense of competence, and failure results in feelings of inferiority.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* In what areas of life have you developed abilities that make you feel very competent? How about at work? When have you felt incompetent and inferior during your life and at work? Why? Share personal stories about your sense of competency as a child and as you have aged, including at work.

- 5) Identity vs. Role Confusion (ages 12-25): Individuals need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to staying true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and weak sense of self.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* When have you most felt as though you were being true to yourself and had a sense of purpose during your life? How about at work? When have you felt you lacked purpose during life or at work? Why? Share personal stories about feeling a sense of purpose or purposelessness as a teenager and as you have aged, including at work.

- 6) Intimacy vs. Isolation (ages 22-30): Individuals need to form stable intimate relationships with others. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* Do you have any long-term friends? Do you have a friend at work? When have you felt lonely outside work, and at work? Why? Share personal stories about developing close friendships or feeling lonely as a child and as you have aged, including at work.

- 7) Generativity vs. Stagnation (ages 30-65): Individuals need to feel like they are being productive and creative in a way that helps others and future generations. Success leads to feelings of accomplishment, while failure results in feeling stagnant.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* When have you felt as though you were productively and creatively helping others and future generations during your life? How about at work? When have you felt too self-centered and stagnant during your life and at work? Why? Share personal stories about feeling a sense of making the world a better place for others and future generations, or self-centered and stagnant, as a young adult and as you have aged, including at work.

- 8) Integrity vs. Despair (ages 65-death): Individuals need to feel like they have lived a fulfilling life. Success leads to a sense of wisdom gained, while failure results in regret and despair.

*Moral Development Partner Questions:* When have you had a deep sense of personal fulfillment during your life? How about at work? When have you felt great regret about failures you've experienced during your life and at work? Why? Share personal stories about times you have felt great fulfillment and regret as a young adult and as you have aged, including at work.