Institute for Character Enrichment

Our Mission:
To promote moral development and a universal understanding of our common moral values.

An Overview of Moral Development

Why do we generate different solutions for the same moral dilemma?

People respond to moral dilemmas using a decision process learned through each person's unique life experiences. This largely subconscious process is based on two important psychological factors: (a) the person's *stage* of moral development, and (b) at the higher stages, the *values* held.

The Stages of Moral Development

The fundamental theory of moral development today was developed in the 1970s by Lawrence Kohlberg, a psychologist and professor at Harvard University. Kohlberg added to earlier works by Jean Piaget and others that moral reasoning and ethical behavior develop through stages. Through his studies at Harvard's Center for Moral Education, he concluded that there are six identifiable stages:

Stage 1 - Obedience and Punishment
Everyone starts here in early childhood. In Stage 1, children conform to social norms and what authority figures such as parents or teachers tell them. Obey the laws to avoid the punishment or other negative consequences.

Stage 2 - Individualism and Exchange
At Stage 2 the focus is deal-making and fair exchange, arising from an awareness that certain behavior can create tangible rewards. "Do this" and you get a candy bar, toys, the keys to the car or a paycheck at work.

Stage 3 - Interpersonal Relationships ("Good Boy/Nice Girl")
By Stage 3 there is recognition that not all rewards are tangible. Recognition from others, such as praise and esteem, can be even more desirable. Stage 3 is still a focus on "me," but the rewards are intangible.

Stage 4 - Law and Order
In Stage 4 the focus shifts from "me" to a broader perspective of society as a whole. One understands that without order there would be chaos and society could not function. Obey the laws just as in Stage 1, but now it is for the good of society.

Stage 5 - Social Contract and Individual Rights
Stage 5 involves stepping back from society as it is to envision how society could be better. Morality and rights take some priority. Laws are important but can be changed through a democratic process.

Stage 6 - Universal Principles
Moral leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King expressed principles respecting basic human dignity of all people as individuals, that inspire feelings and create passion beyond what can be accomplished by legislation. Stage 6 defines the principles by which we achieve justice and maximize the potential of humanity without respect to any specific society or existing norms.

Moral Development by Age

In general, children are capable of developing in Stage 1 from ages 4-7, Stage 2 from about 7-10, and Stage 3 from 10-12. During the teenage years they are generally capable of moving toward Stage 4. There are wide variations in moral development, however, and many adults never get past Stages 1 or 2 regardless of age. Most of society functions at Stages 3 or 4. Stage 6 is considered rare. Moral development is a lifelong process that requires active learning, and is more a matter of "stage" than "age."

Moral Development by Stage

According to Kohlberg, one cannot leap-frog a stage. A person cannot jump from Stage 2 with a focus on "tangible rewards for me" to Stage 4 concerns of society without first progressing through Stage 3 to gain empathy for the feelings of other people. In fact, one *cannot even comprehend* the reasoning of any stage more than one step beyond the current stage.

Progression to the next stage begins when a person encounters a moral dilemma that he cannot satisfy with his current level of reasoning. Only then will he look to the next higher level. This higher-level reasoning becomes attractive because it makes more sense and resolves more conflicts.

How Do We Develop?

To progress to the next stage, we must first gain an understanding of it. Then, at Stage 3 and above, we need to internalize a set of intangible values upon which to base our decisions and behavior. Moral development is a challenging process.

In our culture, that process tends to be very informal and unstructured. Each person develops behavioral ideas and role models through family, teachers, friends, sports, newspapers, Internet, music, television, movies and more -- a wide variety of both good and bad. Through our daily lives we apply these observations to achieve our goals -- learning largely by trial and error. The errors often create tragedies.

Most of us would like to see ourselves and other people advance to the highest possible stage of moral thought based on good values. Progression creates enlightenment, which is good for the individual, and ultimately good for society.

How can we improve society, promote internal change and empower individuals?

Institute for Character Enrichment (ICE)

The Institute for Character Enrichment (ICE) has developed a program to help people achieve both their highest stage of personal moral development and internalize a collection of positive moral values.

ICE's learning model promotes a universal understanding of truthfulness, generosity, forgiveness and our other common moral values that will guide us to our highest potential. ICE will accomplish its mission using the TerraCuddles® characters and their elements of seeing, hearing and touching to reinforce these abstract values.

ICE will communicate its learning approach to a mass audience primarily through television episodes that incorporate moral dilemmas, alternative resolutions, behavioral demonstration and concrete modeling -- all within a series of entertaining stories with drama, music, emotion and humor that enhance the learning process.

TerraCuddless weekly episodes are designed to connect with each viewer at his or her own stage of moral development. Through the progression of each episode, the viewer will face opportunities to internally resolve each dilemma. This self-generation is then followed by subtle guidance to introduce, expand and help lift each viewer, whether child or adult, to their next stage.

It is a powerful concept!

How Can I Help?

We welcome your participation! ICE is actively growing our organization of supporters. We have opportunities for you to host ICE Parties, organize fundraisers, speak to groups, and help spread the word. Your personal and your financial support are always both acknowledged and appreciated. *Please contact us to discuss how you can become personally involved. If you can help financially, please send your tax-deductible contribution to us at:*

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For more information also explore: **www.TerraCuddles.com**