

Heinz Dilemma

"Heinz's wife is very sick and needs a specific expensive medicine to survive. Heinz cannot afford to buy the medicine himself, so he tries to borrow money from everyone he knows. However, he still cannot gather enough money to purchase the medicine. Finally, Heinz becomes desperate and considers stealing the medicine from the pharmacy to save his wife's life."

The dilemma presents a moral conflict between two choices:

Should Heinz steal the medicine to save his wife's life, even though it is illegal and goes against societal rules?

Should Heinz respect the law and refrain from stealing, even if it means his wife might die due to not having access to the necessary medicine?

Kohlberg used this scenario to study moral reasoning and development in individuals, particularly how people reason and make ethical decisions at different stages of their moral development. The responses to the Heinz dilemma can be used to categorize individuals into different stages, ranging from pre-conventional to post-conventional moral reasoning.

Keep in mind that Kohlberg's theory has been subject to criticism and has limitations in its application to real-life moral decision-making. Nonetheless, the Heinz dilemma remains a useful thought experiment to explore moral reasoning and ethical principles in various contexts.

Other dilemmas used by psychologist to explore ethics

Trolley Problem:

The trolley problem is a classic moral dilemma that presents a scenario where a runaway trolley is heading toward a group of five people who will be killed if it continues on its current path. The person facing the dilemma has the option to pull a lever and divert the trolley onto a different track, where it will kill only one person instead of five. The dilemma raises questions about whether it is morally justifiable to actively cause the death of one person to save the lives of five others.

The Lifeboat Dilemma:

In this scenario, a lifeboat is stranded at sea with limited space and resources. It can only hold a certain number of people safely. However, there are more people clinging to debris in the water, and if they are not brought aboard, they will likely drown. The dilemma forces individuals to decide whom to save and whom to leave behind, raising questions about the value of life, the duty to help others, and the ethics of triage in life-threatening situations.

The Lying Dilemma - Saving a Friend

Meet Ross, a college student who is close friends with their roommate, Sarah. One evening, as they are both studying in their dorm room, Sarah reveals a secret to Ross. She confides that she has been struggling with a severe medical condition for several months but has been hiding it from their friends and family. The medical condition requires immediate treatment, which could be life-saving, but Sarah is hesitant to seek medical help due to fears of the potential consequences and disruptions in her life.

Ross is torn between wanting to respect Sarah's wish for secrecy and feeling the moral obligation to do what he can to help his friend. The weight of the situation becomes overwhelming as Ross considers the potential consequences if Sarah's condition worsens. He knows that Sarah's health could deteriorate rapidly without proper treatment, and he fears that by keeping her secret, he may be indirectly contributing to her suffering.

One day, Sarah's condition takes a turn for the worse, and she struggles to hide her pain and discomfort. Ross is aware that time is of the essence, and her life could be at risk if she continues to delay medical attention. As a close friend, he grapples with the decision of whether to respect Sarah's request for secrecy or to break her trust by seeking help on her behalf.

Ross feels torn between two moral imperatives. On one hand, he understands the importance of respecting Sarah's autonomy and right to privacy. Revealing her secret could betray her trust

and damage their friendship. On the other hand, he believes that saving a life is a paramount moral duty. He considers the possibility that his inaction may lead to devastating consequences, which he could have prevented if he had acted differently.

The dilemma leaves Ross feeling conflicted and anxious, torn between loyalty to his friend and a sense of responsibility to do what he believes is morally right. As the days pass and Sarah's condition worsens, Ross finds himself in an ethical quandary, facing the painful choice of either respecting his friend's wish for secrecy or taking the difficult step of reaching out to a trusted authority to ensure Sarah receives the medical attention she urgently needs.

In this scenario, the lying dilemma highlights the complexities of moral decision-making when a person faces the choice of keeping a secret to respect someone's autonomy and trust, or revealing the truth to potentially save a life. It prompts a deeper exploration of the ethical principles and the consequences of both action and inaction.

The Doctor's Dilemma

Dr. Emily Mitchell, a dedicated and compassionate physician, finds herself facing an incredibly difficult situation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospital she works at has experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases, and the intensive care unit is overwhelmed with patients in critical condition. Unfortunately, there is a limited supply of ventilators available to support these severely ill patients, making it necessary to make tough decisions about resource allocation.

On a particular day, five patients are in dire need of ventilator support to survive, but there are only three ventilators available. The hospital's triage committee, of which Dr. Mitchell is a member, gathers to determine how to allocate these life-saving devices.

Patient 1: Mr. Johnson, a 55-year-old man with underlying health conditions, is in critical condition. He has been battling COVID-19 for several weeks, and his condition has worsened rapidly. His medical records indicate that he has a reasonably high chance of recovery if he receives ventilator support.

Patient 2: Mrs. Hernandez, a 70-year-old woman, is also in critical condition. She has been suffering from severe respiratory distress due to COVID-19. While she has a lower chance of recovery than Mr. Johnson due to her age and pre-existing health issues, her family pleads for any chance to save her life.

Patient 3: Mr. Patel, a 45-year-old man, is otherwise healthy but has suddenly developed severe respiratory complications from COVID-19. He has a good chance of recovery if he receives ventilator support promptly.

Patient 4: Mrs. Lee, a 68-year-old woman, has been battling COVID-19 for a few weeks. Her condition is serious, and she requires immediate ventilator support. However, her medical

records indicate a lower chance of survival compared to some of the other patients due to her age and underlying health conditions.

Patient 5: Mr. Garcia, a 60-year-old man, has just been admitted to the ICU with critical COVID-19 symptoms. He is in urgent need of ventilator support, and his medical records indicate that he has a moderate chance of recovery if he receives prompt treatment.

Dr. Mitchell and the triage committee face an excruciating ethical dilemma. They must decide which three patients will receive the limited number of available ventilators, knowing that their choices may significantly impact the patients' lives and the families involved.

Dr. Mitchell grapples with the principles of fairness, justice, and the responsibility to maximize overall benefit while recognizing the inherent limitations of resource allocation during the pandemic. The decision weighs heavily on her heart as she knows that some patients may not survive without the ventilator support they desperately need.

In the end, Dr. Mitchell and the triage committee must make the difficult decision, carefully considering medical evidence, the urgency of each patient's condition, and the potential for recovery. Their choices highlight the moral complexities of allocating scarce resources during a crisis, where even the most qualified and compassionate medical professionals must confront the inherent limitations of their capabilities.