

The Karma of Ethics

A Course in Conscious Actions

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Course Overview

The word 'karma' has several meanings. Essentially, it refers to the consequences of our actions. Meanwhile, ethics are the principles that guide our behavior.

Professionalism in any endeavor is grounded in examining the choices we make, and how those choices influence both our own lives, as well as the lives of those we serve. As professionals entrusted to care for the well-being of others, it is essential to uphold a standard of conduct that positively influences those who seek our help and advice.

Like so many things in life, however, professionalism is not always spelled out in black and white. For every action there will be a reaction; a cause and effect. The action we take, and how we choose to handle the resulting situation, is determined in large part by our ethics, which are shaped by our morals, our own personal beliefs about what is right and wrong. These are the foundation of civilized society. But while certain morals and ethics are commonly accepted and agreed upon, many are not.

This course encourages you to pause for a moment and reflect on just how powerfully your thoughts, words and actions impact those around you, the world and your own self. It is an invitation to step outside the techniques of your practice and look not only at the underlying motives that guide your behavior, but also at the meaning your actions give to your life.

Ethics and morals are an important part of virtually everything we do, and in professional fields where we are serving as advisors, caregivers and role models, it is vital that we examine the theories and practice of ethical professionalism.

How to take this course

This home study course is designed to be taken at your own pace. Follow the steps below to complete the course and receive your Continuing Education Credit.

Step 1: Review the course objectives on page 4.

Step 2: Study each section in order. The information and exercises in each section are presented in a way that builds on the previous section.

Step 3: Complete the written exercises that appear throughout the course. Having a notebook or journal will be helpful.

Step 4: Complete the “Karma of Ethics” exam (which starts on pg. 55) by recording your answers on the answer sheet provided. You can either cut and paste it into a new document, or into the body of an email.

Step 5: Complete the Course Evaluation on page 63. Again, either cut and paste into a new document, or into the body of an email.

Step 6: Send both your exam answers and course evaluation via email to:

info@theayp.org. Please write “Ethics Course” in the subject of your email.

The date of record will be the date we receive your answers. A score of 70% or higher must be earned to pass. Upon successful completion of the course, a certificate of completion will be sent to you and you will earn two Continuing Education Credits.

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Course Objectives

After taking this course the student will:

1. Be able to explain the difference between ethics and morals;
2. Understand the implications of individual ethics vs. those of an organization;
3. Have a framework code of ethics to help define professionalism;
4. Be able to explain the theory of karma as it relates to ethics;
5. Have a deeper understanding of the importance of ethics and how to apply them effectively in everyday living.

Introduction

In many ways, we live in a world of openness and choice. We are free, at least in theory, to decide what we like and don't like, who we want to be, and how we want to behave.

At the same time, we also live in a world of conflict, a world rife with corruption, mistrust and injustice. The value of truth, integrity and honest work often seem under attack in modern society, if not forgotten altogether. As a consequence, violence, materialism and cynicism have become commonplace, and the age-old battle of good vs. evil seems as heated as ever.

Why a course on ethics? Ethics has nothing to do with technical skills or business acumen. It will not improve our ability in those areas. It will, however, have a powerful effect on our professionalism, which has a direct impact on how effectively we perform our jobs, which in turn impacts our quality of life. Without a look at ethics, we miss the very essence of our work—the code of conduct that molds our own lives and thus holds the potential to affect those we serve—and in so doing we deny ourselves the opportunity to live up to our highest potential.

To look at ethics is to examine our behavior and define what constitutes good conduct. What may be considered good by one person, however, is not necessarily considered good by another. This course will ask you to consider not only what constitutes good conduct for you, but why.

In many professional fields we often encounter, and in many cases are confronted by people with physical, mental and emotional limitations. This is especially true in the healing arts. Our clients and students are often struggling with a variety of challenges—everything from depression and anxiety to eating disorders and drug addiction to emotional upheaval and other life crises. The way in which we respond can have a profound impact on those who seek our help. If our goal is to be of the greatest positive influence, examining and defining our own morals and ethics is essential to raising the bar of our professionalism, as they are at the heart of our work.

This course aims to examine how Karma—the law of cause and effect—and ethics intersect within the context of professionalism. As human beings, we need order to survive and thrive. Order requires rules, and rules require codes of conduct. The concept of karma reminds us that everything we think, say and do has a consequence, and how we translate our thoughts into words and actions is a direct result of the rules and codes we use to determine what is right and what is wrong.

With this in mind, let's take a closer look at karma.

What is Karma?

In simplest terms, karma is action. Essentially, everything we do is karma. In the context of spiritual practice, karma is defined as the totality of our actions in each state of our existence, meaning that wherever we are in *this* moment, whatever the circumstances of our life, is a direct result of the actions we've taken up until now. As a system of belief, karma refers to the law of universal justice, or the principle of cause and effect. It is the idea that every thought, word and deed produces physical and mental effects.

Despite popular conception, karma is not punishment or reward. It is not objectively good or bad. It is merely present results of past actions and attitudes. Simply put, *life becomes what life does*. This is the essence of karma, the understanding that all life is energy, and all energy is ultimately creative. Without death, there could be no new life. This is the natural order. Karma is a way of understanding our place within it. The theory of karma asks us to consider the consequences—both to our own selves as well as to the world around us—of our every thought, word and deed.

As far as we know, the concept of karma has its origins in ancient India. The first known occurrence of the word in writing appears in the Vedas, the world's oldest scriptures (where the word *yoga* also first appears), and belief in karma is a central part of many Eastern religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism, which all have their origins in ancient India and which also all believe to some degree or another in reincarnation. Because of this, the concept of karma is often associated with rebirth, the general idea being that we are all moving through cycles of birth, death and rebirth in

order to complete a learning process, the end result of which is said to be the ultimate liberation of our souls from worldly suffering, i.e. “Self-liberation,” also referred to as “Self-realization” or becoming enlightened. So if, for example, you struggle in this lifetime with relationships, or a short temper, or if you really want to be a great singer or a doctor or simply good a good person, the law of karma suggests that these are things we are here to learn about in order for our self to become whole and our soul to become liberated.

It’s important to realize that one need not believe in reincarnation for the theory of karma to hold value in terms of helping us not only to understand and navigate our lives, but also to find meaning and deep joy in them. It can be helpful, however, to consider the notion of reincarnation in light of the First Law of Thermodynamics, which tells us that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, it can only change form, which can *only* mean that some part of us was here before “we” arrived, and some part of us will continue to live on after the “we” that most of us think of ourselves as is gone.

Whether we can ever truly know what other forms we may inhabit or not, we can be reasonably assured that in the here and now we are all embodied in human form, and what the theory of karma asserts is that we—i.e., our souls—have chosen this life as the fastest path to our liberation, and part of the reason we have chosen it is because it gives us the experience of *humanness*. This includes how we think and feel, as well as how we, through our senses and lenses of perception, experience the world. Without the experience of humanness, karma tells us, we would not have the opportunity to learn all of our earthly lessons.

And herein lies the challenge: In addition to a mind, body and soul, part of being human involves having a psyche, and part of every human psyche is the ego, which serves an important function, that of self-preservation, but which also tends to see itself as the center of the universe. This can create tremendous suffering if left unchecked. Learning to shift our focus from the ego, which seeks to self-gratify, to the larger Self, which seeks wholeness, connection and harmony, is considered our “karmic work.” Contrary to some beliefs, the goal of karma is not to overcome, ignore or otherwise destroy the ego, but to integrate it and learn to use it in service of our work, and hence our ultimate freedom.

The branch of yoga known as ‘karma yoga’ teaches that the path to liberation is paved by selfless action. If we can learn to surrender our individual will to the will of The Divine—sometimes referred to as the Supreme or Eternal Consciousness, or simply God—karma yoga asserts that our egos will have less ability to influence us negatively, and thus hinder us from completing our work.

There are two ways karma yoga tells us we can achieve the goal of sublimating the ego. The first is simply by seeking to be of service, i.e., finding a need and doing our best to fill it. The second is by paying attention to the karmic implications of *all* of our actions, right down to the way we breathe. How we breathe, after all, has a profound impact on our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Because of this, karma yoga seeks to remind us that even the simple act of breathing has karmic implications.

One theory of karma holds that there are **four great passions**—Deceit, Greed, Anger and Pride (easily remembered as D-GAP)—and that all immoral and unethical acts

result from being motivated by one or more of these passions, with greed considered to be the root cause of the other three. If we can learn to transcend greed, the theory asserts, we would automatically transcend deception, anger and pride, which often lead to discord, violence and other forms of suffering.

According to this doctrine, we all carry one of the four passions to a greater degree than the others, and it is part of our work in this lifetime to learn to free ourselves of whatever negative influence that passion might be having on our karmic growth. This can only be done, the theory asserts, with deep awareness and a strong desire to seek the truth, since the passions, not wanting to lose their influence over us, will try to hide themselves from our awareness. We may not think of ourselves as a deceitful person, for example, but while we may not make a habit of lying to others, our deception may appear in the form of an inability to be honest with ourselves about our true motives for certain behaviors.

Unlike professional work, karmic work is not about achieving status or material gain. It is about becoming aware of the influences that motivate our behavior and eliminating the ones that cause us to suffer. The promise of karma is simple: The more we can remove suffering, the more peace, joy and love we will experience.

Inherent in the theory of karma is the understanding that the human soul has three activities of expression: Thinking, speaking and doing. Again, while karma does not judge any thought, word or deed as objectively good or bad, any thought, word or deed that contributes to or causes suffering is generally considered “bad karma,” whereas any thought, word or deed that reduces suffering and/or brings joy, love, connection or

wholeness is generally considered “good karma.” When we lack discipline over the three activities of our soul’s expression—i.e., when they become motivated by the four passions—we are said to accumulate bad karma. When we do learn to discipline the expressions of our soul, on the other hand—when we surrender our egos and allow ourselves to be of service—we’re said to build up good karma.

What this means is that karma is not fixed. It is not fate. It is an ever-changing landscape of infinite possibility. And while it is true that there are some aspects of our karma that we cannot change—our genetic family, for example, or the time and place we were born—it also true that there are many other things we *can* change—everything from the knowledge we possess to the beliefs we hold, to the way we conduct ourselves and what pursuits we choose, to the degree of awareness we have. We can even change our names if we want. All of these things have an influence on our karma.

The way we change, karma tells us, is through practice. Again, cause and effect. If we can discipline ourselves to inhibit behaviors that cause suffering and allow for the flow of others that reduce suffering, the promise of karma is that we will begin to influence our lives in a positive direction. It’s important to note, however, that it is not only our behavior that karma asks us to consider. It is our thoughts and attitudes, as well. How we perceive the world and interact with our environment (i.e., all of life) is considered to be one of the biggest determinants of our karma.

The Three C's

One method of approaching our karmic work is **The Three C's: Control, Carefulness and Compassion.**

Control refers simply to becoming more aware of and regulating our thoughts, words and actions. The law of karma encourages us to think thoughts that are good and noble, to speak words that are true and helpful, and to act in ways that serve the needs of others, reduce suffering and bring joy. A regular practice of meditation and/or journaling can help us with this.

Carefulness is a reminder to remain non-attached, but not indifferent, to our emotional shifts. As virtually every person who's ever lived can attest, if we're not careful, we can very easily get swept up in the current of powerful emotions, and as a result get pulled into situations that cause us to suffer. To cultivate "good" karma, we're encouraged to be on the lookout for emotional riptides, and to learn to see them for what they ultimately are—a passing phenomenon—in order to maintain a clear view.

Compassion refers to maintaining a sense of concern and care for the sufferings and misfortunes of others. Karma encourages us to have compassion not only for those who are obviously suffering or less fortunate than we perceive ourselves to be, but for *all* people. We tend to forget that everyone is struggling with something. As a result, we often hold unrealistic expectations for people, and when they fail to meet them we become upset, often angry, disappointed and/or hurt. Practicing compassion reminds us not to judge, to recognize that everyone has his or her own karmic work to do, and that

what may be good for one may not be good for another. If we can remain compassionate, karma holds that we can pay attention to what the other person is feeling, rather than simply what they are saying or doing. This gives us a better chance of not getting swept up in our emotions, which in turn enables us to observe life more clearly, which in theory gives us a greater capacity to choose a course of action that will create the greatest good for the greatest many, including our own selves.

Putting the Three C's into practice is one way that negative or "bad" karma from the past can be transformed, but it is not the only way. To improve our karma, we are also encouraged to recognize the abundant nature of life, and to remember that all energy is ultimately creative. Though we may feel at times caught up in periods of stagnation or even regression, karma reminds us that everything is a cycle, that out of every death, new life is born.

In light of this, karma encourages us to refrain from fear and doubt, to believe in ourselves and maintain an uplifted outlook, and to be on the lookout for opportunities. Timing is considered an essential element in the shaping of our karma. Many opportunities come only once, and if we're not paying attention, if we're caught up in emotional riptides or not aware of our what our karmic work is all about, we can easily miss valuable opportunities to advance us on our path.

For most people, the biggest challenges to improving karma are simply to remain balanced—physically, mentally and emotionally—and to stay aware are. No matter how fortunate we may be, no matter how prepared we think we are, life is inherently unpredictable, and inevitably things happen that cause us to lose our footing, and thus our

balance. This is why, according to karma, we do well to have a practice that helps to keep us balanced and aware.

Viewed through the lens of karma, the world is merely a mechanism for overcoming negative karma by producing positive karma. We are encouraged to pour selfless love into our thoughts, words and actions, to believe in our good karma, and to remove prejudices and bias that limit our opportunities for growth. Again, cause and effect. If you don't believe something is possible, mostly likely you won't try, and if you don't try it will never be accomplished.

Karma tells us that life happens spontaneously, that self-determination (the cause of liberating action) can manifest anytime your self-awareness becomes strong enough to recognize that you have the power to free yourself from whatever bonds or limiting influences might be holding you back. Simply becoming aware of this notion often creates a shift that inevitably results in the form of opportunities that would not exist otherwise. We sometimes call this "good luck" when really it is simply a shift in energy, and thus a shift in direction. But again, we must be ready when the opportunities present themselves, or we will miss them.

Karma tells us that each of us came to this world to complete a mission, that whether pleasant or unpleasant, it is our soul's chosen desire to fulfill the learning process that our life affords us. According to karma, each one of us is a wave in the infinite ocean of energy that is the universe. Karma reminds us that some part of us has always and will always exist, and in light of this, it encourages us to take action now that give us the best chance of remaining balanced and aware and moving forward on our path.

Exercise:

Take a few minutes to write a paragraph about your life, exploring any karmic patterns you may have observed, as well as any behaviors or attitudes you might shift that could potentially improve your karma. Please do this now before you continue to the next page.

After you've written your paragraph, reduce it to one sentence.

Then reduce that sentence to a single word.

This is your karmic word. According to the theory of karma, this is the work you have come here to do.

Take a moment to sit with it and reflect on it. Maybe you wish to change it? Maybe you have a better understanding of how to proceed with certain decisions? Maybe you see your life in a new context? Either way, doing this work is an important part of understanding the theory of karma and the role it plays in our lives.

Perhaps after reading this chapter, you can see how the concept of karma is one of the main building blocks of ethical theory. With that in mind, let us now turn our attention to ethics, as well as the morals that form them.

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Ethics and Morality

Like karma, the word *ethics* has more than one meaning. An ethic is a code or a rule created by an individual or an organization to establish standards of conduct.

Therefore, “ethics” are sets of these codes or rules. At the same time, ethics also refers to the study or branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.

What then are morals?

In the context of this discussion, morals refer to an individual’s personal beliefs about what is right and wrong. The word *moral* can also refer to a lesson concerning what is right or wrong that can be derived from a story or other experience, but for the purposes of this course, morals can be understood to be the personal standards from which we choose what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behavior.

Ethics lay the foundation for the choices we make. Morals lay the foundation for the ethics we establish. Without morals, we would have no ethics, and since it is well understood that different people often abide by different ethics, this begs the question: Where do our morals come from?

One of the most popular theories of moral development was presented by Lawrence Kohlberg, a renowned American psychologist. He speculated that individual morals are formed in six stages over three levels of development.¹ Kohlberg’s theory is based on the distinction between thinking and reason. In other words, he was not

¹ Kohlberg, 1964 – 1984, *The Journey of Adulthood*, pg. 332

concerned with what people think is right or wrong, but *why* they think it is right or wrong.

The three levels of moral development as defined by Kohlberg are: **Pre-conventional, Conventional** and **Post-conventional** (or **Principled**) **Morality**. Each level is divided into two stages.

In Level One, **Stage one**, the individual (usually a child) decides what is right or wrong based on punishment and obeying those perceived to be superior. In **Stage Two** the individual begins to define what is right and wrong by what brings pleasure, sometimes called “naïve hedonism.”

In Level Two, **Stage Three**, “Being good” becomes important in and of itself. There is a strong emphasis on living up to the standards and expectations of the family or social group. In **Stage Four**, right and wrong begin to be defined by the larger social order, including laws and customs. The fulfilling of duty is seen as good.

In Level Three, **Stage Five**, the adult begins to see laws and values as relative and changeable, but believes that generally rules should be upheld. That which achieves “the greatest good for the greatest number” is generally considered to be of the highest moral standard. In **Stage Six** the individual develops and follows self-chosen ethical principles in determining what is right and wrong. These are part of a carefully considered and well-articulated system of values and ideas that form the basis for the individual’s actions and life pattern.

Kohlberg’s theory has been criticized for being biased toward white, upper-class men and boys, as well as for failing to account for certain inconsistencies in moral

judgment, but even Kohlberg's critics accept the general notion that our individual morals form in response to our upbringing and environment, and that they develop in stages as we mature, with one stage building upon the other.

Despite having six stages, however, Kohlberg suggested that most people's moral development stops at Stage Five, and that only a few progressive thinking individuals advance to Stage Six. He referred to Gandhi and Martin Luther King as examples of Stage Six thinkers. It's important to note, however, that one need not be a pioneer of social change or a notable historical figure in order to develop and live by a strong moral code, nor does living by a strong moral code make a person infallible. As karma teaches, we all have our work to do, and we do well to remember that everyone, no matter how successful, influential, wealthy or famous, is struggling with something.

In addition to the six stages, Kohlberg further speculated that there is a **Stage Seven**, which he suggested sometimes emerges toward the end of a person's life, after he or she has spent a considerable amount of time living within a given value system. In this stage, the individual shifts from seeing him or herself as separate from everyone and everything to identifying with the universe itself. Moral reasoning, in this case, becomes connected to seeing one's self as unified with a higher source, often referred to as God or The Divine.

This universality introduces the question of faith and asks us to consider to what degree or not our own faith informs our morals and ethics, as well as to what degree or not our faith *should* inform them, since faith is ultimately a personal matter and can often lead to conflict when different people do not share the same faith. If our morals and ethics

lead us to conflict or violence, are they useful? Are they sound? Are they as fully-formed as they could be? The answer is not always clear.

Apart from the question of faith, there are three basic issues that most people struggle with when it comes to morals and ethics: **Egoism**, **Truth Telling** and **Relativism**. Let's look briefly at each.

Egoism

There is no shortage of theories about the role of the ego in the formation of morals and ethics. The theory of psychological egoism, for example, states that human motivation is based on self-interest, i.e. that all of our actions are ultimately driven by a desire for self-satisfaction and personal gain, and that our morals and ethics derive from this inherent motivation.

The theory of ethical egoism takes things a step further in stating that all of our actions *should* be motivated by self-interest, that we should act only for the sake of our own interest and satisfaction and that we should consider what benefits us and act accordingly. This may seem like a rather inhumane approach to life, but the general idea behind the theory is that we know we need others in order to succeed—in business, in relationships, in life in general—so if we are truly acting from a place of self-interest, we will be very careful to consider the needs, desires and feelings of others. Furthermore, the theory asserts, if we are taking care of ourselves, we will be better equipped to be of service to others.

Thomas Hobbes, the renowned English philosopher, argued that in our natural state we seek nothing but our own selfish pleasure.² Such individualism, however, naturally leads to war, which few, if any people, truly want. So out of pure self-interest and a desire to self-preserve, Hobbes theorized, we form systems and enter into social contracts that require us to surrender certain aspects of our natural freedom to a governing body in order to control the unlimited pursuit of self-interest.

Was Hobbes right? Are the theories of psychological and/or ethical egoism right? Certainly it would be hard to argue that many, if not most people are motivated much, if not most of the time by self-interest. Even in the case of benevolent acts, after all, one could argue that there is an underlying motivation of self-interest and self-gratification.

The question these theories ask is: Are people naturally selfish, and should we structure our institutions to reflect this fact, or can people be motivated by genuine benevolence, and if so, how should our morals and ethics reflect that?

As professionals, we may want to reflect on these issues as they relate to the formation of our own moral and ethical codes.

Truth Telling

No discussion on truth telling would be complete without an exploration of the question, “What exactly is truth?” Unfortunately a full inquiry into this question, which has been debated by philosophers for centuries, is beyond the scope of this course, which

² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ethical Issues in Business*, pg. 7

is not to say it's not worth going into or that you're not encouraged to investigate it more deeply on your own if you feel so inclined. It is, and you are.

For the sake of simplicity, however, we could say that *truth* is that which is in accordance with fact or reality. This is, in fact, a common definition of the word. But this definition doesn't account for personal truths. For example, some people believe God exists, others don't. Who is right? And who is to say? Not all truths can be verifiable, after all. One might argue that instead of being true or not true, a thing could simply be *unknown*, which may indeed be true. But that's not exactly helpful when you consider the strength of human convictions. Whether a thing can be proven as true or not, some people, it seems, are simply bound to believe it and others are not.

This, of course, raises many questions: What is true for you vs. what is true for someone else? How much of our truth are we comfortable sharing and with whom? At what point does withholding a truth become a lie, and is lying ever "better" than telling the truth? How does all of this factor into the formation of our own individual morals and ethics?

Immanuel Kant, widely considered to be the most significant moral philosopher in history, argued that one should simply never tell a lie.³ His theory rested on three principles: 1) that we don't want others to lie to us, so we simply shouldn't lie to them. Truth telling, he suggested, should be a "universal" practice for all people; 2) That lying undermines the dignity of others and thus corrupts the moral capacity of human beings, which, Kant argued, corrupts society itself since society is based on morals; and 3) That

³ Ethical Issues in Business, Donaldson, Werhane pg. 8

lying destroys the major source of human development, i.e. knowledge. Not only does lying thwart the discovery of new truths, Kant argued, it prevents others from acting rationally and freely because it denies them “reality.”

Kant’s theory is not without its critics or holes. It doesn’t seem to account for instances where people would rather *not* know the truth, after all. Nor does it seem to be reasonable in all circumstances. For example, you give someone your word that you’ll keep a secret. Then you find out they intend to do harm, or that that they’ve committed a crime. Is it still appropriate to keep your word? What if the person whose secret you promised to keep is a family member? What may be true for some may not be true for others.

To navigate these often murky waters, it can be helpful to look to the practice of yoga, which, it is important to understand, includes both science and philosophy. The science of yoga tells us that if we do certain practices in a certain way, we can calm our minds and balance our nervous systems, thus relieving stress and minimizing both illness and discomfort, and in turn increasing overall well-being and joy. Meanwhile, the philosophy of yoga tells us that an essential part of practicing yoga correctly—i.e. effectively—is being truthful. *Satya*, or ‘truthfulness’, is the second of the five Yamas, the moral principles that lay the foundation of yogic philosophy. In other words, being truthful, yoga says, is simply good for us.

According to yoga, truthfulness has three levels: Mental, verbal and physical.

On a mental level, truth lives in our perceptions. If our minds become agitated or dull, if they become clouded with emotion or inertia, they become less able to discern

truth. For this reason, yoga encourages practices that help us to calm and uplift our minds so that we can perceive clearly. It is only when we can perceive clearly, yoga asserts, that we can see and understand our own Self clearly. And it is only when we can perceive our own Self clearly that Self-realization—the ultimate goal of yoga—becomes possible.

On a verbal level, truth lives in speaking words that align with the truth as we perceive it. If we speak falsehoods, yoga tells us, we create conflict within our Self, which creates discord in the mind, which in turn creates stress in the body, which more often than not leads to illness and/or discomfort, all of which can have an adverse effect on our ability to act and serve as professionals.

It's important to note, however, that while yoga encourages us to be truthful, it also encourages us not to do harm, so we should be mindful, according to yoga, and careful to speak only words that are useful and good. Of course, even virtuous words can sometimes lead to hurt, so in order to discern which words ought to be spoken or not, yoga encourages us first to intend no harm, and if no harm is not possible—as is sometimes the case—to speak the words that will do the least harm, or serve the greatest good for the greatest many.

Finally, on a physical level, truth lives in our actions. If our work and deeds align with our perceptions and words, yoga tells us we will cultivate peace and harmony within ourselves and experience increased well-being and joy. If not, yoga assures us that in one way or another we will suffer.

Of course, life is not always so black and white, and we must sometimes make difficult decisions. Consider the following story: Once upon a time, a rabbit scurried past

a yogi who was sitting in the forest, and hid under a nearby bush. A few moments later a hunter, seeking game to feed his family, came by and asked the yogi, who knew exactly where the rabbit was, “Which way did the rabbit go?”

If the yogi tells the truth, the rabbit will be killed and harm will be created. On the other hand, if the yogi does not tell the truth, or simply chooses not answer, the hunter and his family may go without food.

Should the yogi’s moral beliefs be imposed, or should the truth simply be spoken without consideration for the consequences that will likely result? Whatever choice the yogi makes will depend on his or her personal ethics. This is but one example of why it’s so important to consider what truth means to us, and how we value expressing it, or not.

Relativism

Like egoism and truth telling, the issue of ethical relativism is one we face continuously. Simply put, different cultures often have different values. This leads to different morals, which creates different ethics, which often leads to conflicts between cultures. The question ethical relativism asks is: How should we think, speak and act in the face of cultural behavior that is different, and potentially abhorrent, to our own personal value systems? If one culture practices genital mutilation, for example, and we disagree with that practice, is it up to us to impose our beliefs to try to stop that tradition? Or is that not for us to interfere with? Again, the answers are not always clear.

It’s important to note that cultural differences are not limited to issues of nationality, religion or faith. In many instances, different micro-cultures exist within a

larger macro-culture, often resulting in moral and ethical disagreements among otherwise culturally similar people.

For example, reconsider the story of the yogi, the rabbit and the hunter, only now imagine the yogi is a businessperson whose dilemma is not whether or not to give up the location of the rabbit, but what price to charge for the information. Is that any more or less right or wrong than whatever choice the yogi may have decided to make?

Two things are certain: Whether any choice is “right” or “wrong” is almost always relative depending on each individual’s personal ethics, and either way in each case there will be consequences—in other words, karma—which encourages us to consider continuously whether the choices we’re making are leading toward or away from our own suffering, as well as the suffering of others.

With that in mind, let’s turn now to look at the role of individuals within the culture of business, and the role of business within society at large.

Ethics – The Individual and the Organization

Because the ethics of professional organizations – i.e. businesses – sometimes conflict with the morals and ethics of individuals, it is important to look at ethics in the context of both individuals as well as the organization. It is also important to consider that whether your own work binds you to an organization or not, as a professional, you are also a businessperson who is responsible for conducting business within the framework of a larger society. This all raises several important questions, namely, what exactly is the role of business in society? Is it simply to provide goods and services for a profit? Or do businesses have a responsibility to give back to the communities and societies that allow them to exist in the first place? Also, what is the responsibility of individuals in upholding their own personal morals and ethics vs. those of a given organization, especially when doing so may cost an individual his or her job, or otherwise disrupt their ability to make a living and/or provide for a family?

As is often the case with ethics, the answers are not always simple.

For much of history, businesses that efficiently and cost-effectively produced goods and offered services at prices consumers were willing to pay were generally seen as acting responsibly. As societies evolve, however, so do their needs, and in recent years there has been a global call for businesses to act *more* responsibly. In addition to providing health benefits, supporting artistic endeavors, providing day care facilities and subsidizing educational enterprises, among other things, many businesses are now being

pressured – and are often expected – to help with a wide range of social, environmental, civil rights and even political issues.

Within this evolution, there is ongoing debate: What is the “right” level of giving back for each organization? How much of a given business should be about free market exchange and how much should be about social responsibility? Do businesses have a responsibility to society even if it adversely affects the profits or survival of the organization? Or is the responsibility of a business first to its bottom line and then, only if it can afford it comfortably, to society? Where and how do we draw the line?

Ultimately it is up to the leadership of each individual organization to decide what constitutes good and bad behavior in the context of doing business. But while historically most business leaders were seen as doing a good job as long as the bottom line was strong, the proliferation of technology in the modern world – everything from instant communication and social media, to viral, as well as fake news and consumer reviews – has made many businesses much more interwoven with the social fabric, and pressures from various consumer, political and environmental groups, as well as attitudes and movements among the general public, have all made it incumbent upon many business leaders to think not only of profits and the interests of the organization, but of the entire social order of which their business is a part.

As society continues to evolve and business becomes ever more intertwined with the social order, inevitably more and more people find themselves playing a dual role – that of a private individual with his or her own personal morals and ethics, and that of a businessperson with duties and obligations to organizations that sometimes ask them to

prioritize the bottom line over their own moral and/or ethical sensitivities. Inevitably, conflicts and various quandaries arise.

For example, someone who cares deeply about the environment may find him or herself working for a company that does harm to the environment. But because the worker has a certain set of skills that that company – or other companies like that one, who do similar harm – value enough for that person to be able to make a living. If the worker doesn't have other skills or means to acquire them – and perhaps has a family to feed, as well – that worker finds him or herself in an ethical bind. And who's to say what the "right" thing is?

In spite of recent societal shifts, many people continue to hold to the old maxim that business is business and if some people get their feelings hurt, well, "that's just business." This school of thought, which is based in practicality, says that personal values should be kept separate from business, period.⁴ If people could just accept and practice this, the theory holds, there would be no conflict. The only problem is... that's not true. Because this way of thinking encourages individuals to leave at home and out of the workplace one very fundamental element of their identity, i.e., their value system, it can – and frequently does – result in an internal conflict for the individual.

In terms of individual well-being, the importance of knowing and honoring one's own personal moral values cannot be understated. This is crucial for everyone, and it is *especially* important for any professionals whose business involves caring for the well-being of others. At a fundamental level, moral values are based upon our assessment of

⁴ The Moral Climate of Business, Vincent Barry

worth. They define how we interact – with others as well as ourselves. They dictate the goals we set, the attitudes we adopt and how we adapt to new challenges and demands. If we choose actions that are in conflict with our core needs and values, we inevitably move toward our own destruction. We become anxious, depressed, delusional, addicted and/or otherwise Self-destructive, often without even being conscious of our situation. This is why saying that personal values have no place in business is so dangerous: It invites profound psychological problems. And for those entrusted to care for the well-being of others, it makes it virtually impossible for them to perform at their highest level.

It is worth noting that the question of values ultimately involves an inquiry into what human existence is all about. The desire to find meaning in life is unique to human beings. As far as we know, humans are the only creatures who ask: “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going and why am I here?” As Psychologist Eric Fromm said, “Man is the only animal who finds his own existence a problem which he has to solve and from which he cannot escape.”⁵

Our values determine the meaning we discover in life. Because business is a part of life, and because business involves people (the individual), this means that the need for moral and ethical decisions must be present if we wish to discover the highest, as well as the deepest aspects of our own being. If we wish to live our fullest potential, our personal lives cannot be separated from our business lives, and while in a “perfect” world, business ethics would always be aligned with those of the individual, that of course is not the world we live in. Because of this, it is essential for our individual and collective well-

⁵ Eric Fromm, *The Sane Society*, PP 23-24

being not only that we thoroughly examine our own personal values, but that we choose, as much as possible given our individual ethics and skillsets, to be involved in businesses – and to conduct business with organizations and other individuals – that support our highest callings. At the same time, it is equally important that we be careful how we judge the choices of others.

For example, one person may believe that lying is simply wrong under any circumstances. Another person may be a defense attorney who has to defend a client he or she knows is guilty. The moral purist might say the attorney is telling a lie of omission by not disclosing the client's guilt. But disclosing the client's guilt would go against the ethics of the legal trade. Does that make the attorney “wrong” or somehow a “bad” person for adhering to a different code? In the eyes of the moral purist, it might. What value is the attorney contributing to society, after all, the purist might say, by working to keep criminals out of jail? What the purist may not understand, however, is that there is a larger system of justice in play, and the reality is that certain laws punish certain people more harshly than others – some might say unfairly. This can – and often does – result in families being torn apart, communities fractured, and lives in many cases destroyed unnecessarily. The attorney could well be fighting rightly according to his or her own morals for a different level of justice than the purist is able to perceive.

Of course, it also happens that people who have broken laws and/or committed egregious ethical violations for which they should be punished receive little or no repercussions, often because they wield power and/or influence within or over an organization, while others are held responsible for the same behavior. This lack of

accountability creates a murkiness that can easily diminish the value of established ethical codes, ultimately giving them little or no meaning. Inevitably when this happens, organizations and individuals alike begin to falter as they struggle to find direction.

In other words, it is a basic requirement of success for both individuals and organizations to have clear and strong codes of ethics that are upheld by both as much as possible. The more the personal values of the individual are in line with the ethics of the organization, and vice versa, the greater chance both will have of succeeding on every level.

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Take a moment now to consider and your own personal values. Without thinking too much about it, write down the ten things you value most in life. This could be anything from love and laughter to honesty, loyalty, kindness or simply getting out and exploring the world. Write your top ten values now before continuing on.

Now that you've written down your values, take a moment to examine them in the context of your work or business. Ask yourself: What is my role as a professional? How do my morals and ethics support me in my professional life? Are my actions in line with my beliefs? Are there any areas where I might be turning a blind eye, and if so, what affect might it be having on my well-being? Am I happy? Am I healthy? Do I feel generally fulfilled? Or is there something I need to look at? Am I engaged in negative thought patterns and/or other Self-destructive behaviors?

After you've thought about it, take as much time as you need to write your answers down. You are not required to submit them, but you are required to do this. Note how your own morals and ethics guide your decision making around this exercise.

Code of Ethics

“I will follow that method of treatment which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and abstain from what is deleterious and mischievous... While I continue to keep this oath unviolated may it be granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of the art, respected by all men at all times, but should I trespass and violate this oath, the reverse be my lot.”

—from the Hippocratic Oath

Achieving and maintaining ethical integrity both internal and external to an organization or business implies a continuing development and refinement of clear and specific codes of professional ethics. Ethics provide the foundation for specific codes of conduct. Without such a foundation, ethical codes can easily blur into blind reactions to a current crisis, or become meaningless generalities.

Clear codes of ethics are essential to establishing integrity and credibility, both for individuals as well as organizations, and in a world of instant communication and viral news, it is both more challenging and more important than ever to establish and maintain integrity and credibility. Simply put, good ethics is good business.

The natural question then is: How does one formulate a “good” and effective code of ethics?

There are several concepts to consider with regard to this topic. The first is defining what constitutes good and bad behavior. Operationally, ethics can be thought of

as a set of standards, developed by human reason and experience, by which free human actions are determined to be humanly right or wrong, good or evil.⁶

The term “humanly” implies behavior that, in a generally accepted sense, either serves the common good or not. For example, a doctor who is a good surgeon, who performs unnecessary surgery on a healthy person, may be a good surgeon, but an unethical and possibly an evil person.

A second concept to understand is that the law and ethics are not necessarily congruent. For example, it is against the law to kill, and most people would agree that taking another human life is morally and ethically wrong. At the same time, many states have laws of capital punishment, and in cases where those laws are enforced, what is ethically right for many is not supported by the law. It is important to understand, however, that in most societies, laws usually follow the ethical attitudes of the general population, which is one more reason why it is so important for individuals and communities to uphold the codes they establish for themselves. If people don’t take their own ethical codes seriously, why should governing bodies?

A third concept to consider is that of ethical sanctions. Sanctions are commonly thought of as penalties that prompt people to avoid unethical behavior, but sanctioning something can also refer to rewarding people in such a way that it prompts them toward ethical behavior.

For example, what prompts an employee not to pad his or her expense account?

What prompts an employee to tell the truth about making a mistake when he or she could

⁶ The Moral Climate of Business. PP 35, Vincent Barry

possibly get away with lying? If an organization doesn't have a system of ethical sanctions in place, the business risks failure or at best superficial compliance because its rules or codes of ethics will be seen as meaningless.

Several principles and standards of ethics have survived hundreds of years of human experience. Considering them can provide helpful guidance in terms of establishing your own codes of conduct. In no particular order of importance, they are:

- *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* The Golden Rule is among the most enduring ethical standards. It has been a prominent force among most religions and cultures throughout history.
- *Treat all humans with fairness.* This is a commonly accepted rule of justice, however it begs the question: What exactly is fairness? It might be worth having this debate with others in order to gain perspective on where your own values stand in relation to others'.
- *So act that your action will create, in the long run, the greatest utility, i.e. well-being.* This Utilitarian maxim encourages us to consider the long-range consequences of our actions. Of course, it is not always possible to foresee all possible outcomes, but it would be hard to argue that at least considering them could be a helpful practice.

- *So act that your act could be made a general law, which could be proved, from human experience, to work toward general human and social success.* This maxim, from Kant's Categorical Imperative, encourages us to judge action as ethical or unethical simply by asking, "Suppose everyone did this?"

Ethical standards are general maxims and **ethical codes** are specific statements of what is regarded as right and wrong within a particular situation – within a particular organization or for a given individual – in the here and now. Whether a code is enforced or not is another question, but the concept is clear: A code of ethics is a set of statements indicating actions considered ethical or unethical. Such statements are developed by the realistic application of general ethical standards to current situations and environments.

A written code of ethics provides quick and clear-cut ethical criteria for day-to-day decision making. A clear, specific code demonstrates an organization's serious interest to develop and maintain a professional ethical posture. If a code is carelessly vague or too general to apply, or if it simply doesn't address certain situations, it can easily lead to confusion and behavior detrimental to success. For example, if an employee takes a friend to lunch and includes it in his or her expense report, should the employee be fired? Or should there be some other disciplinary action? In order for a code of ethics to be effective, it must be clear, it must cover as many areas of application as possible, and it must be enforced with appropriate rewards and punishments.

Sample Professional Code of Ethics

As a _____ professional, I am guided by these ethical principles of professional conduct. Whether I am working with clients, the public, or other peers and professionals, I promise to:

- Provide safe and effective instruction;
- Provide equal and fair treatment to all clients;
- Stay up to date on the latest techniques and practices within my field and to understand the practical application;
- Maintain current certifications and knowledge of my business;
- Comply with all applicable business, employment and copyright laws;
- Protect and enhance the public's image of my profession and business;
- Maintain the confidentiality of all client information;
- Refer clients to more qualified professionals when appropriate;

Do any of these apply to your profession? Take a moment now to write out your own personal code of ethics. This is for your own reflection. If you work for or with an organization, compare your personal code of ethics to that of the organization. And if you're not sure what the organization's code of ethics is, take it upon yourself to find out.

Code of Conduct

While codes of ethics lay out general principles intended to help govern our decision-making, codes of conduct define specific practices and behavior that are required or prohibited, either as a condition of our interaction within the structure of an organization, or simply in our own personal life. For example, a code of ethics might state that we should treat all people with respect and dignity, while a code of conduct might forbid specific behaviors that go against that code, such as sexual or verbal harassment, racial intimidation, and/or inappropriate touching. At their core, codes of conduct help us to build healthier and safer interpersonal environments.

Ethical standards are usually general in nature and wide-ranging in scope. They are designed to provide a set of values or decision-making approaches that enable us to make independent judgments about the most appropriate course of action. Conduct standards, on the other hand, generally require little judgment – you either obey or incur a punishment, and the code of conduct provides a clear set of expectations about which actions are required, acceptable or prohibited.

Many smaller businesses can survive without a formal code of ethics or code of conduct, however the risk is greater for misconduct when clear guidelines are not spelled out or enforced. Regardless of the size of an organization, a strong understanding of ethics and a clear code of conduct can only contribute to the success of the enterprise.

Of course, simply *having* a code of conduct is only the first step. In order to have a meaningful impact, codes of conduct must be followed, and individuals must be held accountable to them.

It is also worth noting that certain professions have ethical standards and codes of conduct that supersede those of the business itself. For example, yoga teachers are bound to a set of standards known as the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*. Considered to be the foundational principles of the yoga practice, these codes – established over 1,500 years ago – discourage lying, greediness and words or actions that cause harm, among other things. One might expect those who run yoga studios or other yoga related businesses would adhere to these codes, and in most cases they do. But there are instances where they do not, and in those instances it is up to the yoga professionals conducting business in that environment to be aware of their circumstances and the codes that govern them, and to choose actions that – to the best of their ability – align with the codes of the practice they have devoted themselves to teaching and practicing.

That said, it is also important to remember that at the end of the day we are all human, and that sometimes we make mistakes. In the interest of harmony, it is important to be forgiving – within reason, of course – of ourselves and each other. Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are two of the ways that we self-regulate. Without some accommodation for our humanness, they are bound to be incomplete and/or unrealistic. This is not to say that our codes should excuse unethical behavior, only that they should take into consideration the fact that sometimes people err, and that that does not always make them unethical, untrustworthy or otherwise bad people.

A simple code of conduct that can be helpful in virtually any situation is simply to do everything with kindness and love... and only after forethought. As the law of karma tells us, we are, after all, what we think, say and do. *Life becomes what life does.*

Take a moment now to reflect on the codes of conduct that govern your behavior. Ask yourself if there are any areas where you can improve, or if there are any codes you should add, change or do away with. Consider this in light of both your professional life as well as your personal life. Write down any thoughts or ideas that feel relevant and/or meaningful. This is for your own reflection. Take as much time as you need.

Work Ethic

No course on ethics would be complete without mentioning the Work Ethic.

Sometimes referred to as the Protestant work ethic because it derives from the Calvinist movement attributed to the early pilgrims of the United States, the work ethic emphasizes hard work, discipline and frugality. Of course, this is not only a protestant manifesto, but one that many cultures have emphasized throughout history.

According to the Protestant work ethic, hard work through disciplined effort has a moral benefit that strengthens the character of the individual. It refers to a set of values based on the importance of simply doing work. As it turns out, this is the same philosophy taught by Karma yoga, which says that for any spiritual path to be meaningful, it must be grounded in everyday experiences, including our work. Karma yoga teaches us not to abandon our earthly work in search of spiritual growth, but rather to embrace it while at the same time developing a new inner attitude towards it. As the great Swami Vivekananda said, *“Work as if you were a stranger in this land, a sojourner. Work incessantly, but do not bind yourselves.”*

The swami’s words encourage us to remember that we are only here in this body and in this lifetime temporarily, and that even though we are here to work, we are not our work. This is the basis of Karma yoga: To recognize that life is a journey, and that we are here to learn and evolve through our work, whatever it may be. We cannot reap the benefits, after all, of action we do not take.

It is often the case that our work can feel like a burden. Karma yoga tells us that this feeling will cease when we engage in work that is done in service to others. Instead of acting selfishly, the teachings of karma encourage us to practice self-surrender in all our deeds. This means releasing ourselves from the grip of the ego, which for most people is no small task. The ego tends to cling relentlessly to a paradigm of separation – that is, it misleads us into believing that we are somehow “better” or “worse” than other people, and even in the face of great personal suffering, it will continue to lead us down this path of delusion.

The good news is that with practice, discipline, faith and a thorough process of Self-examination, we can overcome this predicament, and the promise of Karma yoga is that what awaits us on the other side is nothing short of true freedom.

The philosopher Descartes famously said, “*I think, therefore I am.*” Karma yoga, however, teaches us that in fact the opposite is true. *I am, therefore I think, say and do.* Shifting old paradigms takes work. That’s what karma is all about. If we can do the work, though, we can begin to let go of our misconceptions about Self vs. other and thus free ourselves of our burdens.

At its core, the work ethic refers to how we feel about our work, and it guides us in how we do it. It includes our attitudes and behavior, and determines how we approach our work and manage the responsibilities that come attached with it. How we communicate and how we treat our co-workers and other people we come into contact with through our work are all part of what defines our own personal work ethic.

Elements of a Strong Work Ethic:

Integrity – To have integrity means to do the right thing, at all times, even and especially when no one is watching. At the heart of integrity is trust. This is why being truthful is one of the cornerstones in the practice of yoga. It is through truthfulness that we cultivate trust, and as professionals who strive to serve others, it is imperative that we be trustworthy. If wisdom is knowing the right path, integrity is taking it.

Quality of Work – This refers not only to how well we do our jobs, but also to the initiative we take. Many people do only what is required of them. People with a strong work ethic, on the other hand, go the extra mile to do the best they possibly can.

Professionalism – This word is broad in scope, but essentially professionalism means demonstrating a strong work ethic and adhering to a morally sound code of conduct.

Discipline – The ability to stay committed, even and especially when the going gets rough, is essential to a strong work ethic. Discipline involves focus, dedication and determination. Having discipline requires that these elements be part of our values.

Sense of Team Work – Our work ethic is not only reflected in how we manage ourselves, but also in how we manage our relationships, which are central to achieving goals, both shared and individual.

In order to demonstrate a strong work ethic, there are a number of important things an individual can do. They include, but are not limited to:

- Creating the greatest good for the greatest many
- Managing time wisely
- Being honest
- Being dependable
- Always showing respect
- Following the rules

- Working well with others
- Staying healthy and fit – in body, mind and soul

For most people, the things on this list are not difficult to understand. It is in the execution of them where the struggle lies. It takes a lot of effort and consistency to prove a good work ethic. With commitment and dedication, however, a good work ethic will inevitably shine through, and success will be the natural byproduct.

The Karma of Ethics Applied

The purpose of this course has been to explore Karma – the law of cause and effect, and the actions we take – as it relates to Ethics – the principles that guide the choices we make – within the context of professionalism. Given the importance of our work, however (i.e., our karma), to our life as a whole, and given also the relationship between Ethics and Morals – the values that determine *who we are*, essentially – a second purpose of this course has been to invite an inquiry into the nature of our life as a whole and the meaning it holds, as well as how that meaning is expressed through our attitudes, beliefs and actions.

Generally speaking, most humans desire long life, knowledge, justice, recognition, love and a minimum of suffering. While some other species are known to seek companionship and possibly even love, humans – so far as we know – are the only creatures on Earth who seek meaning, fame or salvation, or who concern themselves with justice. And while it is true that most other species have their own codes of behavior, humans are the only living organisms whose successful survival seems to depend on morals and ethics.

If *life becomes what life does*, it stands to reason that the more conscious we can become of our thoughts, words and actions (cause), as well as their consequences (effect), the more clearly we can begin to see how our energetic intentions steer the course of our lives. A natural consequence of this is that it becomes easier for us to live with integrity

and more difficult to live without it, and the result of *this* is not only a greater sense of well-being, but a life filled with deep joy and meaning on every level.

The challenge, as always, is to become more aware, because ultimately what we are trying to become aware of is not only our thoughts, words and actions, but also the unconscious parts of ourselves that often motivate them, such as our ego, as well as our various aversions and/or negative thought patterns that may arise due to past traumatic experiences. In other words, we are trying to become aware of our whole Self. This not only requires rigorous Self-reflection, it also requires a desire to see and to be honest with ourselves about who and what we really are, how we're thinking and acting, and what is truly motivating our choices.

This kind of Self-reflection is not easy, but it is essential to our integrity – i.e., our wholeness – and integrity is essential to our success, not only in our work but in life in general.

Integrity has three main levels. The first is keeping one's agreements, the second is being true to one's principles and the third is being true to one's Self. Having integrity implies having an ethical code, and having an ethical code implies having clear values. Additionally, having integrity implies having goals and aspirations, i.e., a desire to grow and evolve. In order to apply the karma of ethics in everyday life, it is essential for us to revisit and remind ourselves of our values, and to reevaluate not only the values themselves, but also how well or not we are living up to them.

Take a moment now to consider your personal goals and write them down. If possible, write at least three goals in each of three areas of your life: Personal,

Professional and Health/Fitness. Once you've done this, take a moment to reconsider the values you wrote down previously in the course, as well as your ethics and current behavior patterns, and consider them all in terms of how they are supporting your goals – or not. Does anything need to be changed or added to your list of values as a result of taking this course? Do you find this sort of exercise interesting and exciting? Or is there some form of resistance? If so, what possible unconscious factors might be motivating that? Might the ego and/or one of the four passions be unwilling to give up its influence over your thoughts, words and actions?

Take a moment to do this Self-reflection now before continuing on.

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Even though most people have a value system that they use to guide their decision-making around what constitutes right and wrong, it is fair to say that most people do not think too much about ethics on a daily basis. Most people want to be successful, however, which begs the question: Why do more people not give more consideration to their personal moral and ethical codes? And why is it so difficult sometimes for many of us to truly honor our own principles?

Perhaps the answer lies in perception – or misperception, as the case may be. There is a common view among many people that achieving success in business and staying true to the art of serving others are in opposition to each other. The business world is

often seen as heartless, lacking integrity and being all about the bottom line. But a positive bottom line need not be achieved without integrity.

The Kama Sutra, the ancient Indian text on the art of living well, tells us that it is good to make money and enjoy the pleasures of life, and that poverty and hardship are not virtues. To be starving and/or desperate, after all, can make it far more difficult for a person to maintain integrity, as it can easily make the temptation to lie or cheat or steal, or worse, much harder to resist.

The Kama Sutra reminds us that it is not money that destroys, but greed. Money has the power to do much good, in fact. When we become attached to money and pleasure without a moral underpinning, however, the conscience often tends to go astray and the decadence of the world becomes inevitable. When profit and pleasure are guided by sound ethics, on the other hand, they become instruments from which to create a better world.

While modern culture sings the virtues of material wealth, the theory of karma challenges us to look at money as a divine force that we must handle responsibly. We are encouraged to earn a good living and even to become rich, but to remain honest and ethical. Our first responsibility, karma tells us, is to take care of ourselves, then our family and friends, and then the world at large, all the while never forgetting to take time for soulful pursuits.

This last element – taking time for one’s Self – is a great struggle for many people. With all the pressures of modern life, it is all too common to “not have time” for soul work. The truth, however, is that taking time for one’s Self is one of the hallmarks of

success. Our professionalism is reflected not only in our technical and communication skills, as well as our business practices, but also in our attitudes and through the image we portray. Without taking time to know ourselves on a deep level, we run the risk of losing connection with our core values, and this will inevitably be communicated, whether directly or indirectly, to your clients, colleagues, employees and potential future clients. Taking time to commune with your Self is a basic practice of Self-respect, and without it our professionalism inevitably suffers.

Take a moment now to think about someone you regard as being successful. What are some of his or her characteristics? What impresses you about them? How might you adjust your ethical codes and/or conduct to move yourself in the direction of embodying more of the qualities you admire in those you see as being successful?

...

In summary, there are three things that we as human beings need to survive and thrive. The first is material goods, including food, clothing and shelter. The second is erotic practice, or sex, to ensure the continuation of the species, and the third is rules of behavior, otherwise known as moral and ethical codes. Without these, human life would disintegrate into chaos.

The law of karma encourages us to consider that we are all here in this life to complete a learning process, and that nothing we think, say or do is without consequence. Applying the karma of ethics to everyday living means working to become more aware –

not only of *how* we're thinking, speaking and acting, but also of the consequences of the thoughts, words and actions we choose.

Because life is always unfolding, and because we are constantly in the midst of a process of change, applying the karma of ethics to everyday living also means checking in with and refining our values and ethical codes on a regular basis in order to ensure that they are serving our highest potential.

The practice of Karma Yoga encourages us to seek wealth and success based on doing work in service of others, and then to use our wealth to continue to make the world a better, more just place. Perhaps most importantly, it encourages us to have faith that we can.

With deep gratitude for your efforts and attention, I wish you great success on your journey, and I celebrate the places within where we have met. May we work to be kind, compassionate and forgiving within reason of ourselves and each other on our individual and collective paths of learning.

Namaste,

Doctor Lynn

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Karma of Ethics Exam

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Karma refers to:
 - a. Our deeds
 - b. The law of cause and effect
 - c. Punishment for unethical deeds
 - d. All of the above
 - e. A & B only

2. The term “karmic work” refers to:
 - a. Learning to integrate the ego into the larger Self
 - b. Learning to shift our focus from self-gratification to wholeness
 - c. Learning to destroy the ego
 - d. All of the above
 - e. A & B only

3. The four great passions of karma are: _____
_____.
 - a. Deceit, Greed, Anger, Malice
 - b. Lust, Greed, Jealousy, Slothfulness

- c. Stress, Worry, Anger, Boredom
 - d. Deceit, Greed, Anger, Pride
 - e. None of the above
4. It is possible to change some, but not all of our karma.
- a. True
 - b. False
5. The three activities of expression of the human soul are _____, _____, and _____.
- a. Thinking, feeling, doing
 - b. Speaking, doing, dreaming
 - c. Thinking, speaking, doing
 - d. Doing, speaking, feeling
 - e. None of the above
6. One way to lessen the intensity of our karmic work is to practice the three C's of Control, Compassion and Carefulness.
- a. True
 - b. False
7. The word "ethics" refers to:

- a. Rules that guide our behavior
 - b. Values that underlie our codes of conduct
 - c. The study of moral principles
 - d. All of the above
 - e. A & C only
8. According to Kohlberg, most people never develop beyond the 5th level of moral reasoning.
- a. True
 - b. False
9. The three traditional ethical issues most people struggle with are:
_____, _____ and _____.
- a. Deceit, Pride, Apathy
 - b. Egoism, Truth telling, Anger
 - c. Greed, Passion, Impatience
 - d. Relativism, Truth Telling, Egoism
 - e. None of the above
10. The theory of ethical egoism states that we should act out of self-interest.
- a. True
 - b. False

11. Truthfulness:
- a. Is a foundational principle of yoga
 - b. Can be expressed mentally, verbally or physically
 - c. Is sometimes relative
 - d. All of the above
 - e. A & B only
12. In order to avoid ethical conflicts at work, a good solution for most people is simply to keep their personal beliefs separate from their job.
- a. True
 - b. False
13. Sanctions are:
- a. Punishment for ethical violations
 - b. Rewards for upholding ethical standards
 - c. An important part of establishing an ethical code
 - d. All of the above
 - e. A & B only
14. Ethical codes are statements of what is regarded as right and wrong for a given individual within a particular situation.

- a. True
 - b. False
15. Codes of conduct lay the foundation for ethical codes.
- a. True
 - b. False
16. Karma yoga and the Protestant work ethic are similar in that they both:
- a. Emphasize the importance of simply doing work
 - b. Believe in reincarnation
 - c. Encourage us to work selflessly in service of others
 - d. All of the above
 - e. A & C only
17. Work Ethic refers to what you do and how you think about your job or career.
- a. True
 - b. False
18. Please list five elements of a strong work ethic.
19. The basis for professionalism is:
- a. Knowledge

- b. Experience
- c. Integrity
- d. Values
- e. All of the above

20. When it comes to Ethics, the biggest challenge for most people is:

- a. Taking time for soulful pursuits
- b. Becoming aware of their thoughts, words and actions
- c. Becoming aware of the unconscious forces that motivate their thoughts, words and actions
- d. These are all a struggle for most people
- e. None of the above

The Karma of Ethics Exam – Answer Sheet

Name_____

Address_____

Date_____ Phone # _____

Profession (please specify any certifications)_____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

16. _____

17. _____

18. _____

19. _____

20. _____

Date received _____ Grade _____

Provider # _____ CEC earned _____

Return via email to: info@theayp.org. Please write “Ethics course” in the subject of your email, and please keep a copy of this answer sheet for your records.

The Karma of Ethics – Course Evaluation

Please complete this course evaluation form and return with your exam.

Course Title _____ # of CEC _____

Date of Course _____ Presenter _____

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Was the material presented in an understandable way | Y | N |
| 2. Were the course objectives met | Y | N |
| 3. Was the course thorough | Y | N |
| 4. Did the promotional materials fairly represent the course | Y | N |
| 5. Would you recommend this course to another instructor | Y | N |

Any additional comments

About the Author

Lynn A. Anderson Ph. D. ND, CYT

Dr. Anderson, better known as Doctor Lynn, holds a Ph.D. in Natural Health, is a Certified Yoga Therapist, Certified Spin Instructor and ACE Certified Fitness Professional. She is the developer of *Kosmos Education...thinking outside the box*, which provides Continuing Education for a variety of certifying organizations, including ACE, Massage Therapy, IAYT and Yoga Alliance.

Doctor Lynn is an adjunct professor at LMU and has been a faculty member to ACE. She maintains a private practice in Los Angeles, lectures extensively and has been published in the Huffington Post, Gaia, Shape, SELF, Red Book, Natural Health and Readers Digest, among other national publications. She is the author of four books on health and spirituality, including “Spiritual Fitness” and “Soul Walking Karma: How to Change What You Do So You Get What You Want.” She is also the producer of Doctor Lynn’s Anti-Aging Workouts and the streaming show Doctor Lynn’s Functional Fitness, on Amazon Prime, JLTV and YouTube.

Dr. Anderson has been involved in the health and fitness field for over thirty years, beginning her career as a part-time fitness instructor teaching a variety of classes, including step, high impact, aqua, stretch, spin, dance and yoga. Through her writing and practice, Dr. Anderson continues to share her passion for health and fitness, believing that good health, happiness and peace are found when we bring balance to the body, mind and soul. If you have health, happiness and peace, you have it all!

A wife, mother and grandmother, her greatest joy is her grandchildren.

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