

Ethical Dilemmas for the Early Childhood Teacher

Cheryl Hall & Judy Levine
Early Childhood Education &
Family Services



A series of white-outlined squares of various sizes are arranged in a decorative pattern on the left side of the slide. There are 15 squares in total, scattered across the vertical space.

My Gift to A Child

- Think about the children in your care and the one special gift that you would like to give to each child.
- The gift should be something you would like children to know, believe in, or be able to do.
- Decorate the box.

What Makes a Profession

- Prolonged training
- Requirements for entry
- Specialized body of knowledge and expertise
- Standards of practice
- Autonomy
- Commitment to serving a significant social value
- Code of ethics



Current Knowledge Base Rating Scale



1. I have not heard of National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC's) Code of Ethical Conduct.



2. I've heard of or seen the Code somewhere.

3. I know about the NAEYC Code.



4. I've read the Code.

5. I've used the Code of Ethical Conduct in my work.



6. I teach others about the NAEYC Code.



7. I also know about and use the Supplemental Code for Administrators.



A vertical column of ten white squares is positioned on the left side of the slide. The squares vary in size and are arranged in a staggered pattern. The top row has five squares, the second row has two, the third row has one, the fourth row has one, the fifth row has one, the sixth row has one, the seventh row has one, the eighth row has one, the ninth row has one, and the tenth row has one.

Case Scenario (fictitious)

- The Nap

The mother of a 4-year-old in your class has asked that he not nap at school, because when he naps he stays up too late at night, making it difficult for her to get up at 5 a.m. to go to work. You think he seems to need his nap to stay in good spirits in the afternoon.

The issue:

- Do you respect the mother's wishes and wake him up OR do you tell her no because he needs the nap?
-
-
-
-

Response:

- *It depends:*
- Ethical if we determine that it is not harmful to the child. 1-2.4: To respect families' childrearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.

Response, continued

- Not ethical if we determine that it is harmful to the child to be deprived of a nap. P.1.1: Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are harmful to children. *This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.*

A series of white-outlined squares of various sizes are arranged in a pattern on the left side of the slide. There are two rows of four squares each, with a smaller square between the second and third squares of the second row. Below these are two more rows of two squares each, and a final row of one square at the bottom left.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What choice would you make?
- How do you feel?
- What is your response to your reaction?
- How are the 'others' (parent, child, co-worker) feeling?
- Whose problem is this?

Values – select 5 most important values

Beauty

Intelligence

Cooperative

Creativity

Competitive

Healthy

Competence

Honesty

Happiness

Education

Friendship

Curiosity

Religion

Courteous

Independent

Doing good deeds

Courageous

Persistent

Peace

Proud

Quiet

Critical

Affectionate

Self-sufficient

What influences Values?

- Temperament
- Culture
- Experience

A series of white squares of various sizes are arranged in a grid-like pattern on the left side of the slide. Some squares are solid white, while others are hollow. They are scattered across the left margin, with some appearing in pairs or small groups.

Value judgments come from:

- Making assumptions
- Lack of knowledge or understanding
- Respect or lack of respect for differences
- AND these judgments may result in:
 - Conflict if not identified
 - Acting in a superior manner
 - Justifying our own position








A series of white-outlined squares of various sizes are arranged in a pattern on the left side of the slide. There are two columns of squares. The top row has five squares. The second row has two squares. The third row has one square. The fourth row has one square. The fifth row has one square. The sixth row has one square. The seventh row has one square. The eighth row has one square. The ninth row has one square. The tenth row has one square. The squares are scattered across the left side of the slide.

Core Values

- Core values are deep commitments held by the profession.
- Core values are consciously embraced by the members.
- Core values of a profession need to be taught.




Core Values from the Code of Ethics

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
 - Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
 - Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
 - Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community and society

Core Values from the Code of Ethics (continued)






- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect



Core Values from the Code of Ethics - reorganized



TRUST

- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
 - Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Ambery & Steinbrunner, *Young Children*, July 2007, pp. 91

Core Values from the Code of Ethics - reorganized, continued

INTEGRITY

- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle

Core Values from the Code of Ethics - reorganized, continued

RESPECT

- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community and society

Definition of Ethics

- The study of right and wrong, duty and obligations.
- Ethics involves critical reflection on morality.
- Professional ethics extends personal ethics to the profession (us as teachers, child care workers, home care providers).
- Ethics involves a conscious deliberation about the moral choices one makes.

A series of white-outlined squares of various sizes are arranged in a pattern on the left side of the slide. There are two columns of squares. The top row has six squares. The second row has two squares. The third row has one square. The fourth row has one square. The fifth row has one square. The sixth row has one square. The seventh row has one square. The eighth row has one square. The ninth row has one square. The tenth row has one square. The squares are arranged in a way that they appear to be part of a larger, partially visible graphic or design.

Professional Ethics

- Professional ethics are behaviors that are right or wrong in the workplace.
- Professional ethics are a reflection of professional responsibilities carried out by all members.



What's the challenge?
Why is this so difficult?

Supporting your decision making:
Using Code Ideals and Principles



How would you respond to the following
dilemmas/questions?



A series of white-outlined squares of various sizes are arranged in a pattern on the left side of the slide. There are two rows of four squares each at the top, followed by a single square, then a row of two squares, then a row of one square, then a row of one square, then a row of one square, then a row of two squares, then a row of one square, and finally a row of one square at the bottom.

Parts of NAEYC Code of Ethics

- Ideals: reflect the aspirations of our profession--this is how we should conduct ourselves.
- Principles: guide and identify practices that are required, permitted, or prohibited--these are our rules of conduct.

A series of white squares of varying sizes are arranged in a grid-like pattern on the left side of the slide. Some squares are solid white, while others are hollow white outlines. They are scattered across the vertical space, with some appearing in pairs or small groups.

Ethical Dilemmas

- Situations that force a person to choose between right or the other right
- Situations that have more than one defensible solution
- Conflicts between core values

Resolving an Ethical Dilemma

- Identify the problem.
- Determine if problem is an ethical responsibility (right or wrong response) or an ethical dilemma (choice between values).
- Can it be solved without making a hard choice?
- Use NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct to help prioritize values and guide an acceptable solution.
- Implement the decision.
- Evaluate and adjust if appropriate.



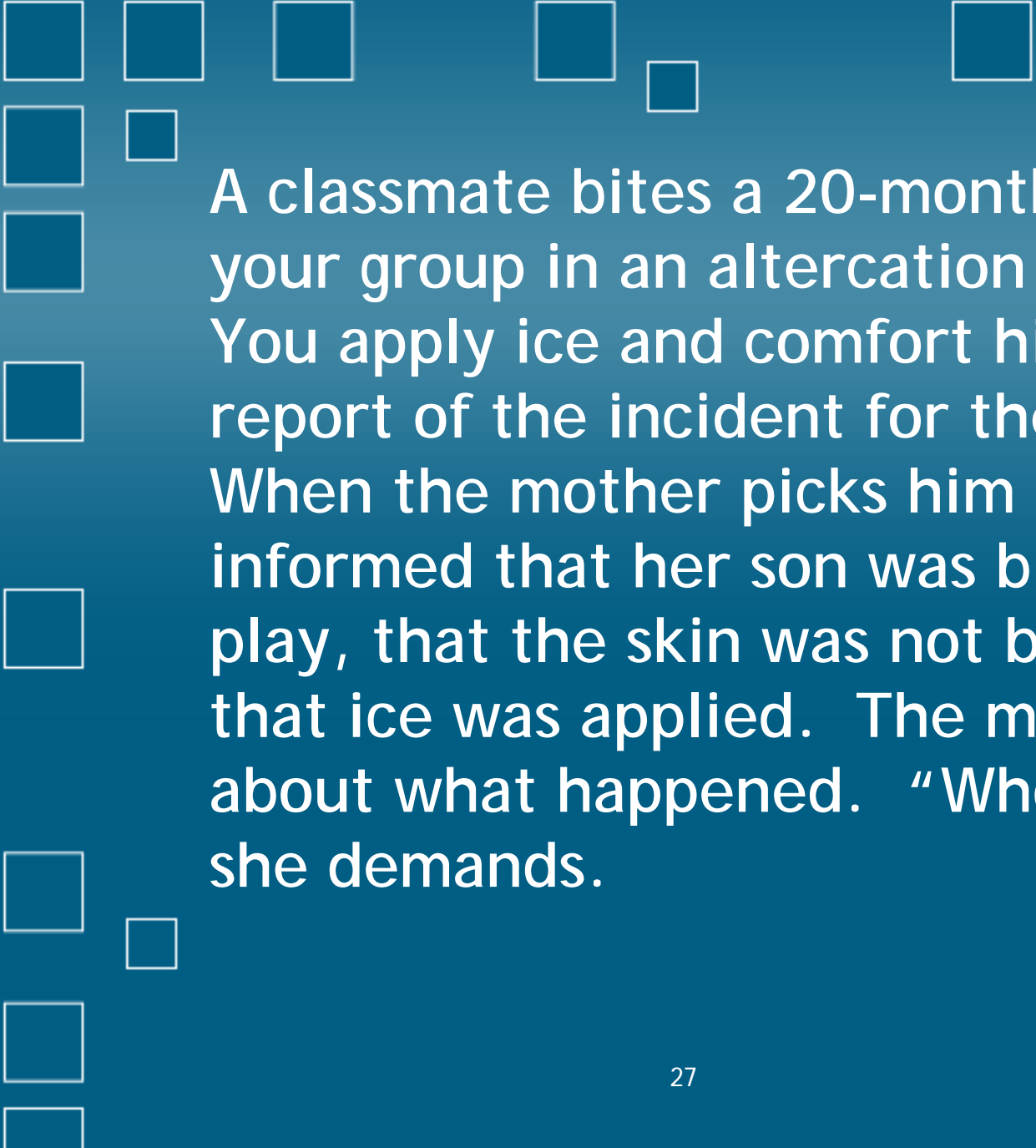
Mary Lou, a 5-year-old in Lauren's class has multiple bruises, frequent black eyes, and psychological withdrawal. Her mother, who appears to be high-strung, says that Mary Lou falls often, but Lauren does not observe any clumsiness on her part at school. Twice Mary Lou's father seems drunk when he picks her up. By law, teachers must report suspicions of abuse to their local child protective services agency.



What should the good early childhood educator do?

- To whom does Lauren have obligations? What things should she take into consideration in making a decision?
- Identify principles and ideals in the Code of Ethics that can guide Lauren's decision on what to do?
- Based on this what should Lauren's course of action be?
- Do you think this example was an ethical dilemma, or simply an ethical responsibility? Why is it a hard situation to deal with?





A classmate bites a 20-month-old boy in your group in an altercation over a toy. You apply ice and comfort him and write a report of the incident for the school files. When the mother picks him up, she is informed that her son was bitten during play, that the skin was not broken, and that ice was applied. The mother is angry about what happened. "Who bit him?" she demands.



Another example might be common in small towns. One family seems to be having difficulties in their marriage. Your co-worker asks you about it because she knows the child is in your classroom.

You are a new graduate who has accepted a position teaching kindergarten at a rural school in a low-income area where students' test scores are very low. You have set up learning centers, and things are going well. You are shocked when your principal tells you the students' parents are adamant that they don't want children to "just play." They expect children to bring home workbook pages they have completed in school and expect that kind of homework too.

Resources

- *Young Children*, NAEYC, November 2004
- *Young Children*, NAEYC, July 2007
- *Exchange*, November/December 2004
- NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct, included in your conference packet and available on line at http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/ethical_conduct.asp
- *Ethics and the Early Childhood Educator*, Feeney and Freeman, NAEYC, 1999