



ETHICS IN DAILY LIFE

Hari Om opened a grocery store in an upcoming middle class colony. Since this was the only store in a new colony, the business picked up. Soon, Hari realized he needed help. He employed a young boy Ramu to help him in the shop during peak hours and in delivering things to the homes of the clients. For one week things went off well, but soon Hari noticed that Ramu was slackening and had started reporting late to work and took a long time to come back after home delivery. Whenever Hari needed him in the shop Ramu was not available. Hari tried his best to talk Ramu into mending his ways, to value time and pay more attention to his work. But even four months latter the situation did not improve. Ramu was often found sitting at the teashop drinking tea and whiling away time talking or playing pitthu. After six months of trying to reform Ramu without success, Hari got fed up and sacked him and employed another helper.

Is this case familiar to you? Have you come across such people in your life who are not sincere to their work? Why is sincerity to work important? Why is the employer unhappy with his workers to the extent that it costs them their jobs? In this lesson we will familiarize you with everything that is important to be a good worker if you are taking up a job. This information is also relevant and important for you or for anybody to be a lovable member of the family, school or friends' circle.



OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to :

- define the term 'ethics' and explain the need of ethics in daily life, at work and at home;
- describe some ethical problems encountered in life;
- list some of the factors that raise the ethical standards in life;
- develop a code of ethics for good living.



2.1 WHAT ARE ETHICS?



Fig. 2.1

The word ethics deals with moral issues and with right and wrong behaviour.

Notes

Ethics tell us about our moral duties and obligations so that our behaviour at work or at home is right, truthful and just. Ethics are a set of standards and rules that are required by an individual for leading a satisfactory family life and being a good worker. Therefore, you require a set of ethics at home as well as at your work place. You can observe the ethical behaviour through the following habits.

- sincerity, honesty
- truthfulness
- respect for self and others
- respect for time
- respect for work
- respect for our environment

Besides these ethics in our domestic life, our work place demands certain specific ethics. These are:

- regularity and punctuality
- confidentiality
- loyalty
- maintaining cordial relations with colleagues and clients
- willingness to learn and take on new responsibilities

2.2 NEED FOR ETHICS

Now let us find out why it is essential to have good ethics and how they affect our interpersonal relationship and work performance.

Any work situation either at the office or at home has three major components: Work, Worker and the Work Place.

- The Work is the actual task to be done.
- The Worker is the person who does the task.
- Work Place includes the place for doing the task, tools and equipments required and the storage space for them.



Notes

You will agree that all the three components are inter-related and dependent on each other. Further, you will also agree that the Worker is the most important component of any work situation. This is so because only the Worker has the ability to think, analyse, learn and manipulate. A Worker can acquire the art of effective management of the Work, the Work Place, himself/herself and the other Workers. A Worker can also be disloyal, lazy, a bad manager of the Work Place and thus ruin the business. Do you recall the example of Ramu and Hari given in the beginning of this lesson?

Thus for the successful achievement of our goals and objectives, efficient utilisation of our resources and to maintain discipline at home and at work, we need to develop and adopt certain work ethics. These work ethics help us to do a task to the best of our ability in a fair, just and impartial way. They encourage us to develop and maintain a cordial work environment where all the people can enjoy each other's support and confidence.



Activity: Visit any work place (like an office, shop, police station, etc.) and make a note of four ethical and four unethical practices followed there.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1

1. Mention five personal qualities that contribute to good work ethics:

(a)	(b)
(c)	(d)
(e)	

2. Select the most appropriate answer from the choices given in order to complete the sentences-
 - (i) Work ethics means
 - (a) morality
 - (b) efficiency
 - (c) competence
 - (d) justice

 - (ii) Work ethics means
 - (a) a set of rules and standards
 - (b) a set of norms and standards
 - (c) right decisions and standards
 - (d) a set of rules and right decisions



- (iii) Three components of the work situation are Worker, Workplace and
 - (a) rules
 - (b) procedures
 - (c) work
 - (d) co-workers

3. Separate the following as general ethics and work ethics :

- (i) regularity
- (ii) sincerity
- (iii) punctuality
- (iv) loyalty
- (v) confidentiality
- (vi) self respect
- (vii) respect for the environment
- (viii) truthfulness.

2.3 ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN FAMILY LIFE AND AT WORK

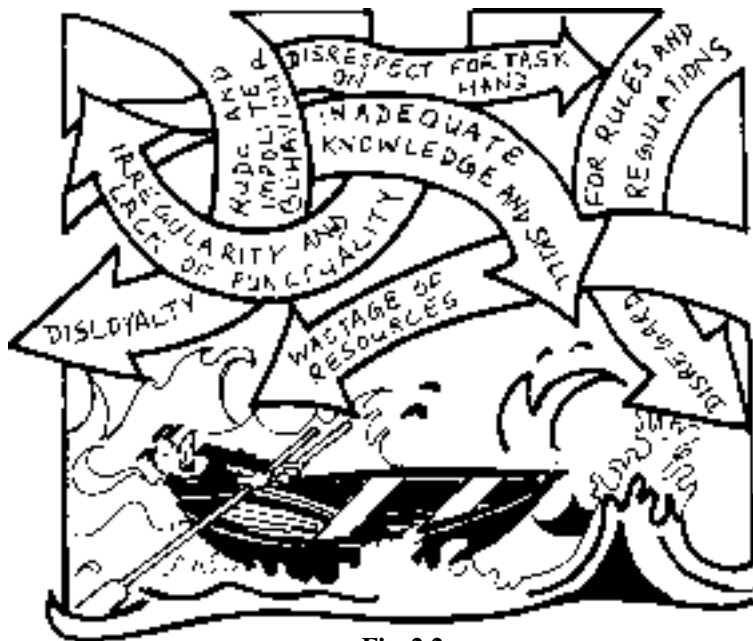


Fig. 2.2

So far, we have learnt about work ethics and their importance. Now let us discuss



some of the ethical problems commonly faced by us when we visit any work place where workers:

- are irregular and lack punctuality
- are rude and impolite
- have inadequate knowledge and skill
- waste resources
- disregard rules and regulations
- disrespect the task at hand
- are disloyal

(a) Irregularity and Lack of Punctuality

Irregularity and lack of punctuality are problems which you encounter frequently in any work situation. Look around yourself and you may come across people who get up late in the morning and are unable to send their children to school on time. They may also not be able to provide their family members with proper meals and have disorganised homes due to their irregular behaviour and lack of punctuality. Such people frequently absent themselves from work. Others like to come in late and leave early as a matter of habit or right. Some workers are never found at their seat during working hours. You may have witnessed the inconvenience caused to the public wanting to pay bills when counter clerks are either late or not found at their seats in banks, post offices, and telephone and electricity offices. The irresponsible behaviour of such people spoils the discipline of the work environment, sets bad examples, causes inconvenience to the public and lowers the image of the organisation.

Are you regular and punctual in studying and completing your lessons and exercises? If not, you will not be able to perform well in your exams and will then feel unhappy about it. You should also understand that this will affect your future career prospects.

(b) Rude and Impolite Behaviour



Fig. 2.3

Sometimes certain family members are in the habit of being rude and aggressive. Not only does this destroy the peaceful atmosphere at home but also creates a bad name for the family. How would you react when the clerk at an office counter does not listen to your request carefully, telling you that he is busy, and asks you to come later? Would you like to associate with a colleague in your office who refuses to

do her part of the work, talks rudely, misbehaves with other colleagues and is always in an aggressive mood? Rude and impolite behaviour of staff can be quite disturbing and embarrassing for an organisation.

(c) Inadequate Knowledge and Skill

Many people project that they have special skills and knowledge to impress others and enhance their job prospects. Suppose you have access to a computer but do not know how to operate it, yet you insist on operating it, who would be responsible if it gets spoilt? Many people claim to be qualified doctors and treat patients for illnesses about which they know nothing. As a result, they can endanger a patient's life. Often people claim to be electricians without any knowledge about electricity or machines and cause heavy losses.

Knowing your job is very important. One should not only be skilled at one's job but also be ready to learn more about it and update ones knowledge and skills from time to time. Inadequate knowledge about nutrition, home appliances, medicines and cleaning agents can sometimes cause serious mishaps at home. Further, lack of knowledge of safety and first aid measures can also be very dangerous. For example, you may get an electric shock while handling a plug with exposed wiring, if you are not aware of the potential hazard of doing such a task. Lack of knowledge about good nutrition and a balanced diet can cause several deficiency diseases like night blindness, goitre, etc. in your family. Similarly, learning your lessons sincerely will add to your knowledge and doing the suggested activities will help you to develop the skills you need to perform well.

(d) Wastage of Resources

You have already learnt in a previous lesson that many of our resources are limited. Some homemakers are in the habit of over estimating and thereby wasting a lot of cooked food. Sometimes, due to improper storage, raw ingredients get spoiled and have to be thrown. Some people take large servings on their plates and leave uneaten food when they are not able to eat it. Making unplanned and frequent trips to the market without preparing a shopping list leads to a wastage of your time and energy, and fuel if you go by a vehicle.



Fig. 2.4

Lights and fans left running, without anybody using them, are a common sight in many offices. Items of office stationery being misused and thrown around are also a common sight. Misuse of office telephones and vehicles for personal work is a common occurrence. You may have also noticed that people do not close taps after drinking water. All this is a wastage of our precious resources.





(e) Disregard for Rules and Regulations

You may have observed that in some homes special treatment is given to sons in comparison to daughters. Often parents show favouritism towards a particular child. Have you noticed a difference in the treatment of a daughter and a daughter-in-law in some families? In certain situations, mentally and physically challenged individuals are discriminated against normal ones, both at home and outside. Some people consider disregard for family norms and culture as signs of modernity. Can you give some more such examples?

In many work situations one finds that the rules and regulations laid down for maintaining discipline, good employer employee relationship and team spirit are disregarded. This is usually observed when promotions are given out of turn, or the management shows favouritism. In some work places you may find that people are discriminated against because of their caste, sex or physical handicap. In many cases women and children are paid less than men for the same job. Employing children in hazardous industries like manufacture of fire crackers, chinks, etc., despite strict government regulations is also unethical. Some students do not complete their assignments themselves and get them done by others or copy other students' work. Besides this, you may have observed some people cheating during examination. This is against the rules and procedures laid down by the examining body and therefore, not ethical. Disregard of rules and regulations often leads to serious situations at home and in the workplace.

(f) Disrespect for the Job

"Oh! I am only a housewife, I don't work". "I am just a simple clerk!"

Have you come across people who feel ashamed about the job they are doing and talk like this? You must have wondered why they feel ashamed.

In our society, it is a common practice to consider some jobs respectable and others less respectable; some jobs high and others lowly. As a result, many people, despite enjoying their work, do not want to tell others about it for the fear of being looked down upon. A housewife's contribution to the successful running of a home is not given due respect by her family and the society in general. Let's take another example, a man selling drinking water on the roadside should feel proud of doing so. Similarly, the passersby must not feel that supplying drinking water on the roadside is a job to be looked down upon. As a student of Home Science, you should respect your course as it is multi-disciplinary, practical and career-oriented. You must have realised the value of studying Home Science in the first lesson of your course.



Notes

(g) Disloyalty

Disclosing your family's secrets and maligning family members in public are considered signs of disloyalty to the family. Taking away common funds and setting up something for your self 'interest' is yet another way of being disloyal to one's family.

In offices, some staff members indulge in activities that are harmful to the success of the organisation they work for. For instance, a chemical engineer may quietly sell the secret formula of a new product to a rival company for some quick extra money. A corrupt union leader may call for a strike of mill workers, thereby stopping production at the mill leading to heavy losses. Taking bribes to grant special favours to certain companies and people at the cost of one's own organisation is a common occurrence today. Cheating one's employer and working for someone else while being in the employment of another are other examples of disloyalty.

Can you think of some more examples of disloyal behaviour?

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.2**

1. Tick mark the statements which are ethically not correct.
 - (a) Making STD calls to relatives from your office
 - (b) Bank clerk opening the counter on time
 - (c) Bank clerks shunting you from counter to counter
 - (d) Going to a party in the office vehicle without making an entry in the log book.
 - (e) Closing the tap while brushing your teeth.
 - (f) Employees working as a team
 - (g) Out of turn promotions
 - (h) Bribing an official to get work done
 - (i) Jumping the queue

2.4 CODE OF ETHICS

Most of the problems discussed in the previous section can be overcome. A list of clearly stated rules, standards and principles to guide our behaviour at home and in public is called a Code of Ethics. A code of ethics can be developed through mutual agreement of the persons involved. The following is an example of a code of work ethics for us to understand and follow diligently, both at work and at home.



- Be regular and punctual at work and at home.
- Do the task assigned to you.
- Be polite, patient, courteous and respectful to all.
- Acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to do the task assigned to you.
- Be prepared to learn more and update yourself.
- Find more and more efficient ways of getting your work done.
- Manage and apply your resources efficiently. Do not waste resources.
- Follow the rules, policies and procedures of your work strictly and uniformly.
- Do not indulge in favouritism and discrimination while doing your duty. Treat everyone equally.
- Have respect for all kinds of work.
- Do not accept favours that may negatively influence the performance of your work.
- Be loyal to your work and to the organisation to which you belong.
- Expose corruption wherever you encounter it.

Let us take a pledge today, that we will follow this Code of Ethics every day.

2.5 RAISING ETHICAL STANDARDS

What suggestions can you give to raise people's ethical standards? Well, read the following suggestions and see if you agree with them.

(a) Public Disclosure and Publicity

Unethical and corrupt workers should be held responsible for their actions. Such irresponsible people should be exposed and they should be criticised and/or suitably punished. Withdrawal of certain privileges and benefits may force them to mend their ways. Bringing their wrongdoings to the notice of family members and colleagues can also create social embarrassment for them. This would also act as a warning for others who may be becoming slack.



Notes

(b) Preparation of a ‘Code of Ethics’

A clear statement of the ethics in any situation and their strict implementation is very vital. Such a code of work ethics makes our expectations clearly known to others. For example, if the code of ethics is written and displayed on a board in the front office of an organisation, the employee will be able to see and follow them. This way the employees will be able to apply and integrate ethical concepts into their work.

(c) Teaching of Ethics and Values in Schools and Colleges

So far ethics were expected to be learnt by a worker on his own, through experience and informal guidance from others in the office. Today, with cut throat competition, multiple challenges and a fast changing environment, it is important that every one should be well trained and efficient. Only then can we give good work performance and expect to rise in our life. Therefore, teaching of moral values and ethics should form a part of our lives at an early stage. This way we will be able to develop as disciplined citizens and build our nation. Starting from an early age also means developing values as habits. And you know that habits are difficult to get rid of.

After going through this lesson, have you learnt more about ethics and ethical practices? Don't you think that we should follow a code of ethics to improve our personal and professional life?

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.3**

Fill in the blanks with suitable word(s).

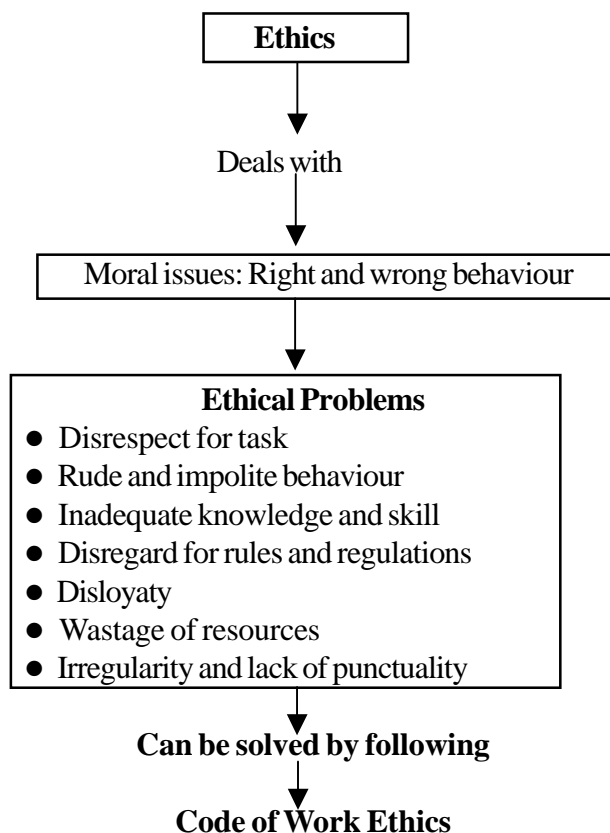
- (i) Be regular and at work.
- (ii) Be prepared to more and update yourself.
- (iii) Find more ways of doing your work.
- (iv) Have for all kinds of work.
- (v) Be to your organization.
- (vi) Follow a in your work place for a better performance.
- (vii) Unethical and workers should be held responsible for their actions.
- (viii) Teaching of and ethics should form a part of school and college curriculum.



Notes



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Why should ethics and values be taught in schools and colleges?
2. Your brother is in the habit of making excuses for not helping others at home. How will you explain him that his habit is wrong?
3. What will you do if you come to know that your colleague leaks confidential office information?
4. List some of the ethical habits you should develop as a student to enhance your performance.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

2.1 1. Refer to text.

2. i) (a) ii) (a) iii) (b)
3. General Ethics: (ii) (vi) (vii) (viii).
Work Ethics: (i) (iii) (iv) (v).

2.2 (a) (c) (d) (g) (h) (i)

- 2.3 (i) punctual (ii) learn (iii) efficient (iv) respect
(v) loyal (vi) code of ethics (vii) corrupt (viii) moral values

For more information
<http://www.ethics.org/resources/links>

