Integrity

Integrity is essential in all aspects of our lives. In order to better understand the concept of integrity, one must be familiar with the following definitions:

**Ethics**—A system of moral principles that governs our behavior. The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc.: *medical ethics; religious ethics.*

**Values**—The ideals, customs, institutions, of a society toward which the people of a group have an affective regard. These values may be positive, such as cleanliness, freedom, or education, or negative such as cruelty or crime.

**Integrity** is a value, like perseverance, courage, and honesty.

These definitions demonstrate that we, as individuals, are guided by our ethics and our values. Living our lives in a way that reveals positive ethics and values demonstrates strong personal integrity in our society. Having strong integrity is an important aspect of our professionalism and is important in any professional setting.

When Choosing to Join an Organization or Company:

It is essential that you understand the ethics and values within an organization so you can identify whether their values, mission, or guiding principles are consistent with your own. The individuals who are most satisfied with the values, mission, and guiding principles of an organization are generally the most satisfied and able to demonstrate integrity. Conversely, one reason individuals are dissatisfied with an organization is due to the organization’s values, mission, and guiding principles not being consistent with their personal goals.

Establishing a personal code of ethics is essential in being a good leader.

When making decisions it makes sense to consider your values as part of the decision making process. These values become central to how you make decisions and how you personally demonstrate your integrity. While many people share common traits, their ethical beliefs are as unique as they are. Furthermore, your ethical beliefs will evolve as you gain professional and life experience. Strong leaders demonstrate integrity in both the personal and professional aspects of their lives. Individuals with a strong understanding of their own values and a willingness to stay true to those values are individuals who have a head start toward being a strong leader.

A person is not given integrity. It results from the relentless pursuit of honesty at all times.

~Anonymous
Steps to Making an Ethical Decision:

The concepts of integrity, ethics, and values are crucial to making decisions in every aspect of your life. It is important to understand how your personal values and beliefs will shape your professional life, the actions you take and whether or not you are a good match to an organization. Each time you make a decision it should be based on what you value. In order to make a good decision, it is important to evaluate the decision carefully following these steps:

Step One: Recognize an Ethical Issue

- Could this decision or situation be damaging to someone or to some group? Does this decision involve a choice between a good and bad alternative, or perhaps between two "goods" or between two "bads"?

Step Two: Get the Facts

- What are the relevant facts of the case? What facts are not known? Can I learn more about the situation? Do I know enough to make a decision?
- What individuals and groups have an important stake in the outcome? Are some concerns more important? Why?

Step Three: Evaluate Alternative Actions

- Evaluate the options by asking the following questions:
  - Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm? (The Utilitarian Approach)
  - Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake? (The Rights Approach)
  - Which option treats people equally or proportionately? (The Justice Approach)
  - Which option best serves the community as a whole (not just some members)?

Step Four: The Common Good Approach

- Which option leads me to act as the sort of person I want to be? (The Virtue Approach)

Step Five: Make a Decision and Test It

- If I told someone I respect, a group of people on the street or a full television audience which option I have chosen, what would they say? Would the person you respect be proud of you for what you have chosen?

Step Six: Act and Reflect on the Outcome

- How can my decision be implemented with the greatest care and attention to the concerns of all stakeholders?
- How did my decision turn out and what have I learned from this specific situation?