

Making Good Decisions as a Resident Life Staff Member
"Slow and Steady Wins the Race of Life"

Ethics is defined most simply as moral principles of an individual. Sometimes an ethical decision can be easily made, and sometimes an ethical decision can be very difficult to make. Ethics is a very demanding part of a residence life staff member's life.

"Man is unique in that he has plans, purpose and goals which require the need for criteria of choice. The need for ethical value is within man whose future may largely be determined by the choice he make"

George Bernard Shaw

There comes a time in every persons life when that person questions his or her values and ethical principles. It is important as a residence life staff member to always choose the decision that a society views as ethical. Although the decision may seem difficult, it is an essential part of the job because not only is a person making a decision for themselves, this person is also setting a precedent for their residents to follow.

Every day humans make unethical decisions. It is human to err. However, it is important for a person in residence life to hold his or herself to a higher standard of living to eliminate these errors as best they can. As a residence life staff member it is crucial to set a strong example for the residents across the campus. Throughout this essay, the metaphor of a person speeding on a highway will be used to help understand the concept of what an ethical decision entails and all of the things involved around making a good decision.

Imagine a situation where there is a clear highway, it's a beautiful day, and the destination intended has a straight path with no problems ahead. The person driving the vehicle cannot wait to get home and has the opportunity to speed to get home faster, what decision should the person driving the vehicle make?

As every person knows, when a person speeds on a highway it does not mean that he or she will receive a traffic citation. The odds of being caught speeding are very slim because there are not police officers everywhere on the road at all times to catch the person committing the crime. The act of committing the crime is seen as an unethical decision because it puts the person committing the crime, as well as others at risk of becoming injured. As a member of residence life, it is important to hold oneself to a higher standard of living and not allow oneself to put these individuals at harm.

Someone once wrote "An ethical person ought to do more than they are required to do and less than he or she is allowed to do." This quote brings me to my first point: The importance of setting the pace.

To further expound upon this quote when making an ethical decision a person must go above and beyond the typical standards of living. It is important to set a fine example of how to act to allow people to follow strong decision-making skills. When leading a pack of cars, if a person is to exceed the speed limit, that person is allowing the pack of cars behind him or her to exceed the speed limit as well.

What this metaphor means is that if a person is to make a decision that is unethical then this sets an example for others to follow and make these unethical decisions as well. As a residence life staff member, a person is setting an example for his or her residents to follow. If they break the rules, then they cannot expect the residents to not break the rules.

All it takes is for one police officer to press the trigger on the radar gun, and sure enough the police officer convicts the person speeding of a crime. When making a decision the consequences must be taken into place. A person must realize if the action is worth the consequences. As a residence life staff member, the consequences of ones actions are extremely high. When a person becomes a member of residence life that

person decides to hold him or herself to a higher standard of living as well.

When driving on a highway, any person driving the speed limit notices that every other car speeds past as if the car going the speed limit was standing still. An ethical decision is a decision that every person has the ability to make. A person knows they will not get pulled over for going a little over the speed limit if there are others going faster. However, that does not make breaking the speed limit appropriate.

In conclusion, making good choices is a crucial part of the daily lives of residence life members. Members must take it upon themselves to set the standards that residents are asked to follow through with. When a member puts his or herself in a position where an ethical decision must be made, it is important to follow through with the decision set by the law and by the standards within the organization.

"I ask that all Americans demonstrate in their personal and public lives...the high ethical standards that are essential to good character and to the continued success of our nation."

Bill Clinton