

Intro to GVV

Intro to GVV presents the “Giving Voice to Values” (GVV) approach to values-driven leadership development. Mary Gentile describes how GVV differs from other methods of teaching ethics in that it does not analyze what the right or wrong thing to do is. Rather, GVV begins from the assumption that most of us want to behave ethically and have an idea of how we should act. To enhance our ability to enact our values, we have to know and practice the seven principles, or pillars, of GVV.

To learn more about values systems and how they vary from culture to culture, watch *Fundamental Moral Unit* and *All is Not Relative*. For complimentary approaches to GVV that also offer methods for voicing values and making ethical decisions, watch the four-part *Being Your Best Self* videos, which include *Part 1: Moral Awareness*, *Part 2: Moral Decision Making*, *Part 3: Moral Intent*, and *Part 4: Moral Action*. To learn about pervasive social and organizational biases that inhibit voicing values, watch *Moral Muteness* and *Moral Myopia*. To discover how voicing values can contribute to professional and personal success, watch *Moral Imagination*.

The case studies on this page illustrate different ways in which individuals or groups give voice to their values. “Pao & Gender Bias” examines the debate Ellen Pao generated in the venture capital and tech industries when she filed a lawsuit against her employer on grounds of gender discrimination.

“Freedom of Speech on Campus” explores how, in the wake of racially motivated offenses at Yale and the University of Missouri, student protesters voiced their values and sparked debate over the roles of free speech, deliberation, and tolerance on campus. “Defending Freedom of Tweets?” takes a look at the backlash Pittsburgh Steelers running back Rashard Mendenhall received from fans after he tweeted a criticism of the celebration of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. “Full Disclosure: Manipulating Donors” examines the difficult position a student intern was in and how she struggled to voice her values.

The GVV Approach

The “Giving Voice to Values” (GVV) video series summarizes the key points of *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right*, written by Mary Gentile with support from the Yale School of Management and the Aspen Institute. The GVV videos may be watched individually or sequentially. The series will be most useful if viewed in its entirety and with the introductory video.

GVV was created for business ethics programs, but its lessons are broad and apply to all professionals in every field including fine arts, liberal arts, communication studies, social and natural sciences, engineering, education, social work, and medicine. The GVV series can serve as a springboard for further discussion of ethics and values as they pertain to individuals’ professional and personal lives.



GVV identifies the many ways that individuals can – and do – voice their values in the workplace. It teaches people how to build the “moral muscles” necessary to do so, and details the strategies people can use to find the motivation, skill, and confidence to “give voice to their values.”

The goal of GVV is to act consistently with our most deeply held convictions about right and wrong. Research and experience demonstrate that values conflicts will inevitably occur in our professional and personal lives. So, when what we believe and want to accomplish seems to be in opposition to the demands of others (peers, supervisors, organizations, etc.), the ability to successfully voice our values and navigate these differences is crucial. This is the starting point for the GVV curriculum.

GVV consists of seven principles, or pillars, that represent ways of thinking about values, our identity, and our own capabilities. The seven pillars of GVV are: *Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations*. Each video in the GVV series introduces and explains one of the GVV pillars.

Gentile also describes the factors that affect ethical behavior and offers techniques for resisting unethical actions. Ultimately, the curriculum helps people build and practice the skills they need to recognize, speak, and act on their values effectively when conflicts arise.

The GVV approach includes:

- How a leader raises values-based issues in an effective manner – what she/he needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary.
- An emphasis on self-assessment and a focus on individual strengths when looking for a way to align one’s individual sense of purpose with that of an organization.
- Opportunities to construct and practice responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalizations for not acting on one’s values.
- Positive examples of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace.
- Practice in providing peer feedback and coaching.

Discussion questions: Introduction to GVV

1. Citing research, Gentile suggests that “moral muscle memory,” or experience in expressing one’s values, can help with speaking up when these values are challenged. Do you agree with Gentile? Can you think of any situations in which such rehearsal or pre-scripting and practice has made it easier, or could make it easier for you to act upon your values effectively?
2. How would you respond to the following statements:
 - a. The hardest values conflicts are in the grey areas; the so-called clear-cut issues are easy.
 - i. *Strongly Agree / Somewhat Agree / Not Sure / Somewhat Disagree / Strongly Disagree*

- b. When it comes to values conflicts, the most important thing to learn is how to analyze a difficult situation and figure out what is right.
 - ii. *Strongly Agree / Somewhat Agree / Not Sure / Somewhat Disagree / Strongly Disagree*
2. After students respond to these two questions, discussion can explore the GVV starting assumptions. That is to say, most ethics discussions focus on the analysis of challenging situations so as to discern what the right thing to do may be, as if ethics were entirely a matter of intellectual understanding. However, although there are many so-called “grey areas,” there are also many more clear-cut issues where most of us (not all) would likely agree that a particular action is over-the-line. Nevertheless, just because there is significant agreement about what the right thing to do may be in such situations, it is still not necessarily that easy to get it done. It is this action question – how do I get the right thing done? – which GVV is designed to raise and help us address.
3. Describe an ethical dilemma or values conflict that you have faced in your work or personal life. How did you handle it? If you had the chance for a “do-over,” what would you want to do differently?
4. What do you think are the key strengths of the GVV approach? Do you see any potential pitfalls? How might they be addressed?
5. How does the GVV approach to values-driven leadership development differ from traditional approaches to ethics?
6. How might the GVV approach be useful in other contexts, besides career or work life? Examples?

Additional Resources

Giving Voice to Values case studies, curriculum, and additional teaching pedagogy are available at no cost to educators at the [Giving Voice to Values Curriculum](#) website.

For a discussion of the “GVV Starting Assumptions,” see Chapter One of *Giving Voice to Values*, “Giving Voice to Our Values: The Thought Experiment.”

A summary of the seven pillars of GVV may be downloaded here: [An Action Framework for Giving Voice To Values—“The To-Do List.”](#)

For further discussion of the GVV approach, see Mary Gentile’s article published in *Organization Management Journal*, “[Values-Driven Leadership Development: Where We Have Been and Where We Could Go.](#)”

Gentile, Mary C. (2010). [Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right.](#) New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Transcript of Narration

Written and Narrated by

Mary C. Gentile, Ph.D.
Darden School of Business
University of Virginia

“Giving Voice To Values (or GVV) is a new and innovative way of thinking about, teaching about and acting on our values in our careers — and in our wider lives. Rather than focusing on trying to figure out what the right thing to do is in any particular situation – an important question, to be sure – Giving Voice To Values asks a different question.

It asks, “Once I know what I think is right, how do I get it done? What should I say? To whom? What information do I need to gather in order to be persuasive? And what are the typical objections or the “pushback” I can anticipate – and THEN what will I say to respond to those arguments?”

The idea behind Giving Voice To Values is that if we simply encounter a values conflict and someone asks us “what would YOU do? We usually respond in one of two ways. We may say “Oh I would do the “right thing.” However we know from research that people often don’t act as they say they would, when it comes to ethical challenges in their real lives. It’s just not that easy.

On the other hand, we may assume a sort of “devil’s advocate” position – the more skeptical or even cynical position – arguing that the decision at hand may indeed raise an ethical challenge but it’s just not possible to do anything other than to go along with the pressures. Or we may even argue that the situation isn’t really “wrong” at all!

So instead, with GVV, we FIRST ask: “WHAT IF you wanted to do the “right thing” in a particular situation and you believed you knew what it was? HOW would you get it done, effectively?” We call this the “Giving Voice To Values Thought Experiment”, and it provides the chance to literally “pre-script” ourselves and to create the most effective action plan we can conceive of, and then to actually REHEARSE that script and plan.

This approach is based on the idea – supported by research – that practice or rehearsal allows us to create a kind of default behavior – a sort of Moral Muscle Memory – that makes it easier and more likely that we can act ethically and in alignment with our values when needed. There are seven pillars or principles of GVV that support this process. Let’s take a look at them.”

For additional information, please contact:

Mary C. Gentile, Ph.D.
Creator & Director, Giving Voice to Values
Babson College
Mgentile3@babson.edu
www.GivingVoiceToValuesTheBook.com

This material is based upon the Giving Voice To Values curriculum (www.GivingVoiceToValues.org). The Aspen Institute was founding partner, along with the Yale School of Management, and incubator for Giving Voice To Values (GVV). Now based and supported at Babson College.

Copyright Mary C. Gentile 2010.