

EMPA Webinar – Ethical Insights into managing crisis & adversity
Wednesday 28 July 2021

Q&A

1. **From Barb Ryan:** Can Mark recommend some (not too dense) reading on this topic that provides strategies on dealing with unethical behaviour around us? (*answered live*)

Answer: A reading list has been provided for anyone to take a look.

2. **From Mark Swiney:** what was the web site again? (*answered live*)

Answer: ethicalintelligence.com.au/the-allegorical-life-blog-and-podcast/

3. **From Paul Simakoss-Ellims:** Did your research show a change between people's perceptions of themselves as leaders, or their organisations, during the day-to-day compared to during times of adversity or incidents?

Answer: I didn't test specifically for this, but the literature is clear that "disasters reveal character they don't create character". That is to say, if your ethics are not in place and fine tuned in peaceful times then they certainly won't be fine tuned and in place under duress. I have certainly witnessed that throughout my career. If a leader treats people poorly on a day-to-day basis they are unlikely to improve during a crisis. First order behaviours are what we fall back on when under pressure. Get the ethics right on a day-to-day basis in all aspects of your life and then they will naturally flow when a crisis hits. This also speaks to the heart of our integrity which was the highest personal, leadership, and cultural ethic in the survey. It might sound like hard work but its easier than cleaning up the mess after the event!

4. **From Terri Anderson:** wonderful to hear articulated the instinct many of us have about the value of compassion in EM. How do we help influence "humanity" in the traditional command/control structures? (i include animal welfare as human needs) :)

Answer: Wow! Big question 😊 Too difficult to answer here but make sure you read my 4th PhD paper which I hope to publish by the end of the year or in the first quarter of next year. I'll make sure EMPA publishes the link (I will publish in open source).

5. **From Anon:** Is there virtue in some of these vices? i.e. using dishonesty to protect people around us... anger can be interpreted as passion? Interested in the grey space where people who are acting unethically interpret their behaviour as valid, or even ethical.

Answer: Good question and the short answer is “it depends”. Emmanuel Kant’s categorical imperative is criticized in normative ethical arguments for being too black and white: “always tell the truth – never lie” as an example. Yes there are times when deviating from this principle is appropriate BUT it requires wisdom and a deep understanding of what greater good is to be achieved, by who and for whom. Deviating into a vice out of self interest is rarely morally good! I am often reminded about the rules of Salsa dancing. You cannot break them until you completely understand and master them 😊.

6. **From Chantelle Rule Murphy:** How do we help leaders in our organisations become comfortable with communicating our vulnerability during a disaster? (*answered live*)

Answer: Although I answered this in session, I would add that it is important to be both Authentic and Competent. What I mean is that we should be authentic with a compassionate emotional response AND have the competencies in place to know what to do about the suffering that we are reacting to. The two go hand in hand.

7. **From Rosemarie North:** Tara Brach & Kristen Neff apply Buddhist principles like compassion to action & say avoiding vicarious trauma. This is more individual. What are your thoughts? It would be great to hear more about virtues & humanitarian comms e.g. community engagement, social listening & interviewing survivors

Answer: Wow! Another big question 😊. I think the short answer is that if you are a person that practices compassion through mindfulness of thought, word, and action, you will naturally bring compassion to everything that you think, say, and do. Thinking, speaking, and acting directly informs our way of being in the world. When we are ‘being’ a certain way, we are influencing the world in that way. It speaks to both our integrity (highest ethic via the EMPA survey) and our authenticity. Don’t underestimate how much you can achieve by how you are being in the world. It is infectious!