

Scenario 5

Corey was drunk. There might be times you can convince yourself that you're okay — this wasn't one of those times. He was drunk and he knew he was drunk. But that wasn't the problem. He had gone to this party with his friends, including a designated driver, but they had already left. He was supposed to go with them, but he was having such a great time he told them he'd find another ride.

Now he was stuck. The only people left who could give him a ride were pretty wasted, themselves. He thought about calling a friend, but it was at least thirty miles to his house and he didn't want to impose. He couldn't stay where he was because he didn't even know the people who threw the party. If he called his parents.... well, he couldn't even imagine the lecture. He had already been given the "spring term senior year keep your nose to the grindstone" talk a hundred times.

A girl he had met that night said her friend was dropping her off and could take him too. Unfortunately, she was pretty buzzed. Corey knew it was dumb to get into the car with a driver you know is drunk. Everyone knows that. But everyone doesn't have to go thirty miles and then face grumpy parents. As far as he was concerned, he was in trouble either way. He needed to make a decision.

NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR

(this is for you)

This case is a good one for discussion because so often young people (of all ages) know the right thing to do in a dilemma, but have a hard time doing it. They don't know how to choose the right thing without great perceived cost to themselves.

In a recent survey of 777 teens between the ages of 13 and 18 released by JA Worldwide (Junior Achievement) and Deloitte & Touche USA, findings indicated that teens "often know the 'right answer' when faced with an ethical dilemma, but need support and ethics education to follow through on that knowledge." (David Chernow, president and CEO of JA / 2005) Given these findings, we need to bring dilemmas into the classroom that are not just about what the correct choice is, but how to handle the follow through. At times, kids truly feel doing the right thing could "ruin" their life (at least their month, which is often a lifetime in a teenager's reality.)

What works best in my classroom is to break the students into groups, have them take a stance and bring it back to the group to argue against another group's choice. Often, they will vacillate between choices but settle on the fact that Corey shouldn't get in the car and then work together to come up with the best possible next steps.

It is really helpful to get students to share experiences when and if they have gotten in a car or behind the wheel under the influence. Get them to talk about how the short cut often seems the easiest and how much our reason for making a choice is simply because “everyone else does it.” If discussion becomes muddled or students begin rationalizing unsafe choices, try simply asking again, “What is the right thing to do?” Then have them continue about why this situation is so hard when one is facing it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(also, debate topics, writing assignments, etc.)

- So, what should Corey do?
- Is that different than what you actually would do?
- If your best friend is ever in this situation what do you hope he or she will do? If your answer is different from the one above, why do you think that is?
- Have you or anyone you know been in a situation like this? What choice was made? Do you think it was the right choice?
- Have you ever made a choice that was contrary to what you clearly knew was the right choice or the smart choice? What factors contributed to your decision? Would you do it again?