

# Ethics: Pillars of Character

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## Goal (learning objective)

Youth will:

- Learn about the six pillars of character: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship
- Discern the need for good character and safe food products and the relationship between the two
- Understand the ethical implications of the decisions one makes while raising livestock

## Supplies

- Handout 1, “Learning by example”. Make the appropriate number of copies for your group (double-sided document)
- One print of each of the character images – Handouts 2–7 (intended to display around room)
- Tape
- Chalkboard with chalk or easel pad with marker

## Pre-lesson preparation

Note: This lesson can be facilitated fully in 1 hour or split into two sessions.

- Read/review the following sections in *Quality Counts* (see resources list below):

Chapter 1, lesson 1 - Activity 1

Chapter 1, lesson 5 - Activities 1-3

- Visit the Character Counts! website and review information about the six pillars of character at <https://charactercounts.org/program-overview/six-pillars>
- Arrive early to the meeting area to allow time to hang up character images around the room

## Lesson directions and outline

### Conducting the activity (DO)

1. Read, “Learning by example” (handout 1, page 1) to the group or have someone else read it.
2. Lead a discussion, asking questions such as:
  - What was the first bad decision that was made?
  - What other bad decisions were there?
  - What could they do if they were in Tommy’s situation?
  - How do you go about making those decisions?
  - What would it be like if there were no rules?
  - What responsibilities do we have to the animals we own?
3. Read “Ethical expectations of 4-H participants” (handout 1, page 2) to the group.
4. Lead a discussion about the pillars, asking questions such as:
  - How do you define good character?
  - How do you know a person is someone you can trust and respect? Is it based on what that person says, does, or both?
  - How does a person’s character affect the decisions he or she makes?
  - Why are these traits important in a person who raises or exhibits livestock?
5. Ask participants to name ways that they can demonstrate each trait in carrying out their livestock projects. Have someone capture responses on the chalkboard or easel pad.
6. Read the first scenario (below), and ask the group what should be done. After the group has provided their answers, ask the group:

- Which pillars of character are important in making this decision?
- Are any of the pillars in conflict?
- Are there any other solutions to this dilemma?

Scenario 1: It is December 23, and when you go out to feed your show pigs you notice that you do not have enough feed to last through the holidays. You and your father go to the feed store to pick up some more feed. Since your show is not far away, you can no longer feed the medicated feed because of the withdrawal time. But the feed store clerk tells you they're out of non-medicated feed. He offers to sell you the medicated feed at the same price as non-medicated feed. (Correct answer is C)

You should:

- A. Take the medicated feed. The show doesn't do drug tests anyway.
  - B. Turn down the offer of medicated feed, thinking that you can find a neighbor who can let you borrow enough feed to last through the holidays.
  - C. Decline the feed and politely inform the store clerk that it's important to follow the rules about using medicines and drugs.
  - D. Tell the clerk that what they are suggesting is illegal.
7. Repeat with each scenario, identifying the most correct answer after the group discussion.

Scenario 2: Before you can make a decision about the feed, the store owner comes along. He's overheard the conversation and tells you that your neighbor Bob, whose son also has show pigs, has just bought a ton of non-medicated feed and might share with you. When you get home your dad calls Bob, who says you're welcome to as much as you need until the feed store gets some more. He says that he and his family are going out of town and tells you where to find the feed. You and your little brother hop on the four-wheeler and go to get the feed. After loading it, you admire the fine-quality pigs Bob's son has. While looking at them, you realize that some of the pigs are validated to another exhibitor in the county. (Correct answers B and C)

You should:

- A. Get your brother and leave.
- B. Point out to your little brother what you see and tell him that it is wrong and why.
- C. Tell your dad what you saw and have him call the county Extension office.
- D. Call Bob and ask him what the deal is.

Scenario 3: The fun at Bob's hasn't ended yet. While loading the feed, your little brother knocks over a storage cabinet in the barn. What comes out of the cabinet is a surprise: illegal drugs. There are no animals in Bob's pens that these drugs could legally be given to. (Correct answer is B)

You should:

- A. Call Bob and ask him what is going on.
- B. Tell your dad and ask him to call your county Extension office.
- C. Tell all of your friends what you saw in Bob's barn and let them know that he is cheating and using illegal drugs to make his show pigs better.
- D. Unload the feed into Bob's barn and leave as soon as possible to try to erase all evidence that you were there.

Scenario 4: Your father recently agreed to be the project leader for your 4-H club. One of his duties is to locate swine projects for the members of the club. He wants to do this as fairly as he can, so he finds a breeder who has enough high-quality pigs for everyone. He schedules a day to go pick up the pigs and you decide to ride with him. When you get there the breeder shows you a pig he has set aside for you. He knows that you are a good feeder so he wants you to have this pig that is better than the rest. (Correct answers are A and D)

You should:

- A. Politely decline the pig.
- B. Take the pig. You should get first choice anyway because your dad is the one who went and purchased the pigs for everyone.
- C. Take the pig. If you don't someone else will, and you will have to show against a better pig.

D. Take the good pig back and draw for the pig with the other members. You may get lucky and draw this one anyway.

Scenario 5: The pig you've raised for the county show is overweight and the show is just 2 days away. A buddy offers to help with some sort-of-legal practice that will get the weight off the pig in time for the show. If you don't take the help, your pig probably won't qualify. (Correct answers are C and D)

You should:

A. Take the help. You have spent a great deal of time with your pig and really want to show.

B. Take the help. The practice is sort-of legal. It hasn't been identified as illegal. Besides, others are sure to be cheating, and this practice isn't considered cheating yet.

C. Decline the help and look for an alternative that is sort-of-more legal.

D. Decline the help. Try to naturally and legally get the weight off and hope that your pig can lose the weight for the show. Learn from this mistake and do better with your next swine project.

### What did we learn? (REFLECT)

- Ask: What are some of the ethical decisions that you face when raising livestock for a 4-H project?
- Ask: Do you know the rules at your fair?
- Ask: Are the rules fair? Why or why not?

### Why is that important? (APPLY)

- Ask: Why are there rules for raising and showing livestock projects?
- Ask: Do we expect the meat and the other food products we purchase to be safe to eat? Whose job is it to make sure food is safe?

## Resources

Boleman, C., Chilek, K., Coufal, D., Keith, L., & Sterle, J. (2011). Quality counts. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Retrieved from [http://agriflifecd.tamu.edu/qualitycounts/files/2010/11/pdf\\_1733.pdf](http://agriflifecd.tamu.edu/qualitycounts/files/2010/11/pdf_1733.pdf)

Character Builder. (2015). Six pillars of character. Retrieved from <http://characterbuilder.management/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/SixPillars.jpg>

Josephson Institute of Ethics. (2009). Character counts! The six pillars of character. Retrieved from <https://charactercounts.org/program-overview/six-pillars/>

University of Idaho Extension. (2006). Ethical expectations of 4-H participants. *4-H animal project record book* (page 2). Retrieved from <http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h/documents-records>

## **ETHICS: PILLARS OF CHARACTER - HANDOUT 1**

### **Learning by Example by Larry Mrozinski**

When Tommy was 8 years old, his father registered a lamb born on December 24 as being born on January 2. His father said to Tommy, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 9 years old, his father bred the family's flock of purebred ewes with a ram of another breed and registered the lambs as purebreds. His father said to Tommy, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 10 years old, his 4-H leader and county agent tagged and weighed newly purchased lambs a month after the ownership deadline. They both told him, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 11 years old, his parents bought him a registered ewe lamb to show at the county fair and changed the ear tag to their own flock tag. His parents said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 12 years old, his grandparents bought him a show lamb and left it with the breeder who fed and fit the lamb until the day before the county fair. The breeder and his grandparents said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 13 years old, his veterinarian issued health papers for sheep he never inspected and that had foot rot and lamb fungus. He said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 14 years old, his neighbor used an electric animal prod on his lamb to get it to brace. He told Tommy, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 15 years old and after winning the Grand Champion Market Lamb at the county fair, he saw his dad having a beer with the judge and paying the judge \$200 for making his son's lamb champion. The judge and his father said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 16 years old, his FFA advisor falsified the number of Tommy's winning sheep proficiency award entry. His advisor said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 17 years old, his uncle used Lasix on his market lamb at the state fair to make it weigh into a lighter class. His uncle said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 18 years old, his brother pumped the loin of his lamb at a national sheep show. His brother said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 19 years old, his entire family knew that he'd given clenbuterol to his market lambs. They told him, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was 20 years old, a friend offered him cocaine. His friend said, "It's okay, kid; everybody does it."

When Tommy was arrested later that night for using cocaine and called his family to ask them to bail him out of jail they told him, "How could you have brought such a disgrace to your family? You never learned any of that at home. Where did you go wrong?" After hearing of his arrest, Tommy's 4-H leader, FFA advisor, county agent, grandparents, uncle, veterinarian and neighbors were also shocked. If there's one thing the adult world can't stand it's a kid who breaks the rules.

## **ETHICS: PILLARS OF CHARACTER - HANDOUT 1, PAGE 2**

### **Ethical Expectations of 4-H Participants**

All participants within the Idaho 4-H program (Extension staff, volunteers, parents, members, etc.) are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner at all times. Ethics are principles of accepted behavior that outline how individuals should act. Ethics deals with the ability to tell right from wrong and being committed to do what is right. While some situations may occur where there is not a “clear cut” answer to whether the action or practice is ethical, an ethical alternative always exists. Using the Six Pillars of Character (established by the Josephson Institute) can help guide you in making ethical decisions.

### **The Six Pillars of Character**

**Trustworthiness** – Be honest. Don’t deceive, cheat, or steal. Be reliable. Do what you say you’ll do. Have the courage to do the right thing. Build a good reputation. Be loyal. Stand by your family, friends, and country.

**Respect** – Treat others with respect. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners, not bad language. Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don’t threaten, hit, or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

**Responsibility** – Do what you are supposed to do. Persevere: keep on trying! Always do your best. Use self-control. Be self-disciplined. Think before you act; consider the consequences.

**Fairness** – Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don’t take advantage of others. Don’t blame others carelessly.

**Caring** – Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude. Forgive others. Help people in need.

**Citizenship** – Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Get involved in community affairs. Stay informed; vote. Be a good neighbor. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority. Protect the environment.

\* Use this acronym to help you remember that people with good character are terrific: (TRRFCC)

Ethics is an important part of everyday life. If you choose to act unethically or allow others around you to do so, you not only tarnish your reputation but also discredit your family, club, and the 4-H program. No prize or award is worth this in the long run. Remember, only one person ultimately controls the decisions you make—you. As a 4-H participant, we trust you will make ethical choices not only within the program, but in everyday life, too.

<https://charactercounts.org/program-overview/six-pillars/>













