

If There Were No Rules or Laws

One way to think about right and wrong (and whether some things are always wrong no matter what) is to imagine what you would think if there were no rules and laws.

Read the following questions and check the answer that is closest to what you think.

If there were no rules or laws, would it be okay to . . .

1. Drive a car as fast as you wanted?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
2. Call teachers and other adult authority figures by their first names?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
3. Stab someone until they were seriously injured?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
4. Vandalize property?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
5. Lie about your experience on a job application?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
6. Wear whatever kind of clothes you wanted to your job?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
7. Use drugs all the time?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
8. Hit someone if you were mad at them?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay
9. Steal someone's life savings?
 Perfectly okay Sometimes okay Never okay

What actions did you mark as **never okay**?

Dilemmas

If problems were easy to solve, they wouldn't be problems!

In some situations, you may have goals that actually **conflict** with each other. For instance, maybe you want to do a particular thing, but your friends want to do something else. If you do what you want,

your friends won't be happy. But if you do what your friends want, you won't be happy.

That's a pretty simple problem, often solved by compromise. Some problems are more complicated—you may really have to think about the right thing to do. Those are truly dilemmas!

How would you solve the following dilemmas?

DILEMMA 1: BEST FRIENDS

Andrew and Michael had been friends since they were five years old. They lived near each other and did just about everything together. Still, by the time they got to middle school, things just didn't seem the same. Andrew was tall, athletic, and popular with everyone. Michael seemed more withdrawn—he didn't really want to hang around with anyone but Andrew. It just seemed like he never tried to fit in with the crowd. Pretty soon, a lot of kids started picking on Michael in small ways, then they started what seemed like a campaign of meanness against him—sending e-mails and text messages, posting pictures on the Internet—all sorts of ways of bullying him. Andrew didn't join in with the others, but he didn't really do anything to stop it. He felt bad for Michael but still wanted to fit in with his own friends and didn't like hanging around with Michael any more. One day, Michael's mother came over to talk to Andrew. She said Michael was getting sad and depressed and she was very worried about him. She asked Andrew to get the other kids to stop picking on him. "Please look out for your best friend," she said.

1. What makes this a difficult problem for Andrew?

2. What is most important for Andrew to think about? (Check only one.)
- Andrew has to look out for himself and do whatever he wants.
 - Andrew should help Michael, even if they aren't good friends any more.
 - Andrew should try to get others to be nice, even if it's not Michael but someone he doesn't even know.
3. What should Andrew do? Why?

DILEMMA 2: EBONY AND DÉSIÉE

Ebony wanted to get a necklace, so she went to the mall with her friend Désirée. When they went into All Gold Jewelers, Ebony saw a necklace she really liked, but it was \$200—way more money than she had. She decided to put it in her pocket, but she didn't want Désirée to see her. She knew Désirée would tell her not to take it—both girls had gotten into a lot of trouble recently and were on probation. When her friend went to look at the rings, Ebony quickly took the necklace and walked out of the store. But when Désirée went to leave, the clerk stopped her and accused her of stealing. The security guard came over and checked her purse, but he didn't find anything. He said she could go if she gave him the name of the one who took it. Désirée thought for a moment.

1. What makes this a difficult problem for Désirée?

2. What is most important for Désirée to think about? (Check only one.)
- Désirée has to worry about herself.
 - Désirée has told Ebony over and over not to get into any trouble.
 - Désirée shouldn't snitch on a friend, no matter what.