

Discussion topic: Do Not Kill
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What's our goal?

Prompt students to challenge their ideas about the rule “do not kill.” Discuss exceptions, and try to reach an amended rule that they can agree is more universally consistent (on either a group or individual level).

Lesson tools/prompts

Mr. Rogers' Trolley and cast.

Outline of Discussion

1. General discussion about the rule
 - a. What are their initial thoughts about this issue?
 - b. Where have we learned these ideas? (Religion, family, justice system?) Discuss distinctions between legality and morality, and how the two are intertwined.

2. Discuss exceptions
 - a. Possible exceptions to bring up if participation is low: Self-defense, military action, medical issues (taking someone off life support or euthanasia), eating meat...
 - b. Why is something okay as an exception?
 - c. Discuss patterns of exceptions: What is the general framework they are using to excuse the exceptions (utilitarianism, etc) → hopefully this will inspire deeper thinking.

3. Trolley problems
 - Diverting the track from hitting 5 people to 1 person
 - Diverting the track from hitting a healthy person to a critically ill person (or peoples)
 - Pushing someone in front of the train to save 5 others... 10 others? 20?
 - Diverting the track from hitting 5 people to a loved one

Discuss why students' answers changed based on the scenario: What values do they prioritize when making exceptions to the “do not kill” rule (E.g. the person's agency, intentions, or the consequences)? This discussion should promote deeper thinking about their underlying values on the morality of killing, and should encourage evolving stances on the issue.

4. Conclusion

- a. Discussion of larger patterns or themes that have come up
- b. Summarizing how people's perspectives changed over the course of the lesson
- c. Reflect on the meaning of the rule

Things to keep in mind:

Paraphrase the students' points every so often

Create a comfortable atmosphere while keeping them on track