

Awake Ethics

A system for aligning your actions with your core intentions

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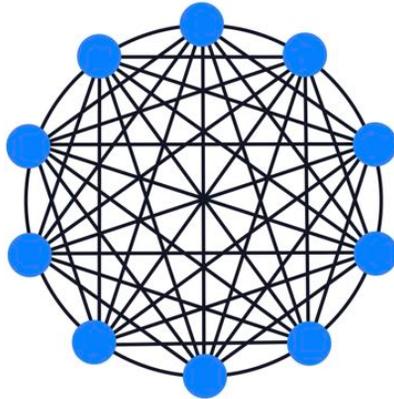


Awake Ethics
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Preface



Preface to Awake Ethics

In my experience as a leader and as an active participant in the world of business, I have been surprised at the persistent prevalence of issues such as lack of trust, acknowledgement, opportunity, and ownership in modern organizations. Some ethical issues such as privacy and harassment make it into the media spotlight but many go unacknowledged and unresolved. They build up and eventually cause health issues and unnecessary, unfortunate losses for organizations. My quest began with the questions: Why do ethical issues persist, really? Is there a sustainable solution?

Ethics were not something that I studied in depth in school or have been particularly interested in throughout my life. I took one business ethics class in school and I found it confusing that there were so many contradicting views on what are "right" and "wrong" approaches to human behavior, interactions, and decisions in business. The professor kept coming around to the same conclusions as to what was ethical in a given situation: it depends. Once I became a leader in the business realm, I found that profit-centered progress and human-centered progress often don't quite agree or align. An action can be good for the goal of profit but not so good for the goal of human connection, peace, and development.

I studied many systems and approaches to leadership early on in my career. A particular system of ethics resonated and was so applicable to my leadership at work. After more study and experience as a leader in the field, I found that this system, when viewed through a modern lens and applied to my leadership, did indeed help positively direct my attention, mindset, and interactions day-to-day. I enjoyed satisfying progress. I felt less stressed and more connected. I led my team toward new potential beyond just civility and status quo work. We enjoyed our work more and made progress toward our objectives with more ease and enthusiasm. I found that creative leaders can drive profitable progress with human-centered decision-making. This system was crucial for retaining the

best team members and making optimal progress. This is the system and approach I share with you in this book.

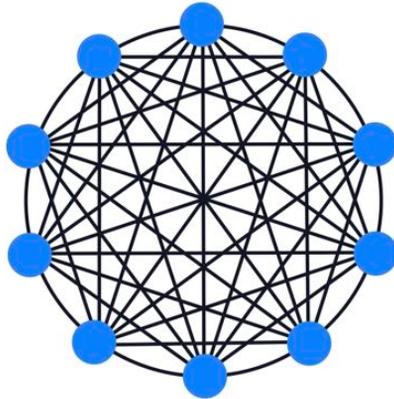
As leaders, we have a choice as to how to communicate and engage with others. We have a choice about how to show up in the world and the impact we make. We shape our own journey step by step, interaction by interaction, decision by decision. We also shape the journey of others we interact with. Leaders have power and responsibility over their own journey as well as the journey of their team members. I believe that it is especially important for rising leaders to study ethics in practice and understand how certain key, universal ethical guidelines can improve the way we collaborate and lead.

I'm excited to share Awake Ethics because the principles underscore the deeper purpose of collaboration and the point of companies and organizations that get so cluttered and twisted in our highly commercialized and incentivized world of business. This guidebook is written for rising leaders seeking to make genuine connections with others, learn, and reach their highest potential. It is for leaders seeking to find true alignment and balance of human-centered progress and profit-centered progress. This universal system of ethics can completely change how you collaborate with others, how confident you feel at work, and how you move along your authentic path. The ten ethical principles will help you navigate tough ethical decisions with more confidence and collaborate with more joy and ease. They will be like secret agent tools to add to your tool belt on this journey toward your highest potential as a leader in your work and your life.

I hope you find this system of ethics thought-provoking and applicable in your own leadership. I encourage you to also come to your own conclusions as to what ethics really are and what "the most good" really is. I hope that Awake Ethics allows you to deepen your experience and the experience of your team in positive ways that you may not have thought possible... Enjoy the process... and the results.

xo Hilary

Introduction



Leadership and Ethics

Unlike the popular term *leadership*, the term *ethics* is not a buzzword used very often in companies and organizations. Many companies have a set of values and basic guidelines but few focus on ethics. Ethics is definitely not a sexy word and many people think ethics are just for troublemakers to learn. It's assumed that we're all ethical as professionals, so little time is spent on learning what ethics are and why they're important.

Ethics became important to me once I was working in the field as a leader and really saw in action, through experience, how interpersonal conflict and obstacles inhibited individuals, teams, and whole organizations from reaching their objectives. I also saw how ethics could go beyond just setting a basic standard for interpersonal civility, to really enable progress and transformation. By practicing ten simple principles, based on an ancient system of ethical conduct, I found that organizations can be environments where teams work harmoniously and enthusiastically while still remaining productive and efficient. Throughout the book, I'll detail how the ten principles, when put into practice, enable organizations to grow and thrive, while allowing people at the individual level to feel supported and challenged as well.

Before we dive into the ten principles and the guidebook work, let's look a bit more closely at what ethics really are and why we should care about leadership ethics.



What are Ethics, really?

Ethics are traditionally defined as principles or guidelines for moral behavior that adhere to the standards our society accepts. They are guiding principles for our behavior; how we should act towards each other and ourselves in ways that cultivate peace and civility. Ethics sound simple enough but in practice, especially in the complex and often competitive environment of business, it can be difficult to really know what is the most ethical action to take and why. Have you found this to be true?

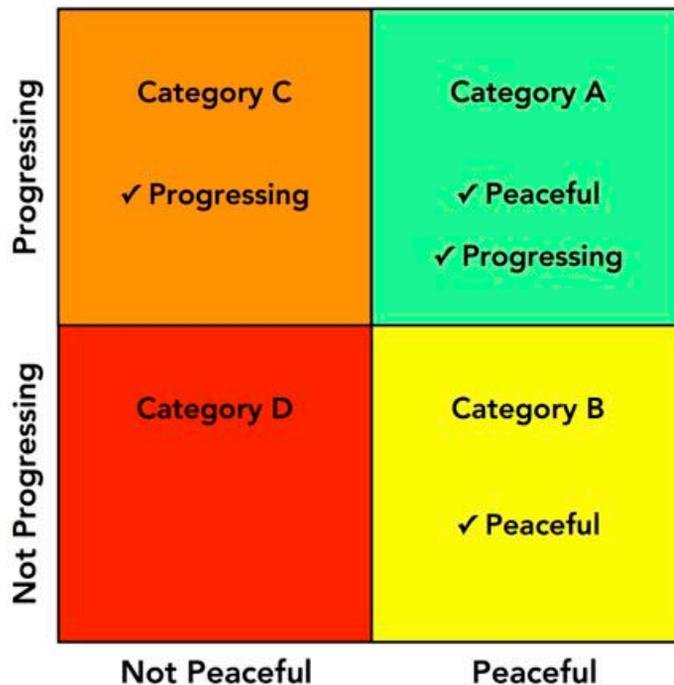
There are many misperceptions of ethics. Many believe that if someone is brought up by good people, they are naturally ethical, conduct themselves appropriately in the workplace, and collaborate elegantly. Another misperception is that as someone gains life experience, they naturally develop ethical behavior. Many people think ethics and values are the same thing. Values and ethics are not the same. Values are qualities that are desirable, or qualities to aspire to. Values are much more subjective than ethics. When companies just have values, they're skipping over ethics. Finally, ethics and etiquette are also very different. Etiquette is a code of conduct that is only relevant for a specific society or group at specific time period. Rules of etiquette stem from a more basic, universal ethical foundation.

Ethics are timeless principles for human conduct, based on a universal understanding, that translate to specific actions. When we study ethics, we begin at the root level of the action: the why and the how. Ethics are therefore decision-making tools, since each action we take is really a decision we make upstream from the action. Let's move on to talk about why a system of ethics is relevant and important for rising leaders.



Why Practice Leadership Ethics?

During my experience in the business world, I found that ethical issues and misunderstandings are the most common obstacles to peace and progress. A shared understanding of ethics was missing. Ethical alignment makes or breaks the culture of a team or organization. A lack of alignment around universal ethical intentions and language results in confusion and interpersonal conflict. I have found that, at any given point in time, teams and organizations fall into one of four categories.



Clearly, the objective of any organization, team, or individual is to be in Category A: peaceful and progressing. There are a few exceptions where Category B or C may be desirable for a specific time or phase of the team's evolution. However, B and C are not sustainable for teams of rising leaders and growing organizations. Let's look at why.

Peace means civility and harmony in interactions. Peace leads to a sustainable day-to-day work environment, free of drama and interpersonal conflict. Peace sets the stage for collaboration. Interpersonal drama, conflict, and misunderstandings are major obstacles to collaboration and the success of the team. This lack of basic human civility and understanding causes the founders and top-level leadership to get involved in peace-making. An environment of peacefulness, through support and alignment, is the first beneficial result of the Awake Ethics system.

However, for growing companies and rising leaders, a system of ethics that provides peace and civility is not adequate. Though this peaceful foundation is important for collaboration to take place, growing companies cannot be satisfied with just civility. Rising leaders and growing businesses need to progress and evolve. Also, financial profit is necessary in business. Sometimes the objective is clear, the resources are available, and the team is ready but lack of motivation and enthusiasm is a deterrent to constructive, focused progress. The second result of the Awake Ethics system is engagement and enthusiasm (or what we could even call happiness). Engagement and enthusiasm fuel progress. Peace and progress enable organizations, teams, and individuals to grow and transform sustainably. Category A teams drive profit from a primary intention of human-centered progress and therefore efficiently and enthusiastically move toward their highest potential through human-centered actions.

Category B teams are usually found within larger organizations. These teams are peaceful and sustaining day-to-day but are often stagnant. This category is stable and may be desirable if you're looking for consistency. However, for rising leaders and achievers, this category can lead to a lack of peacefulness because a lack of progress means a lack of learning and transformational, challenging opportunities.

Category C teams are commonly found in start-ups. Category C teams are high growth teams that thrive off quick wins, highs of achievement, and highs of praise. However, these teams often have interpersonal conflict, animosity, and lack of alignment, which are not sustainable for growth. There is a lot of

achievement and quick-win growth but no commonly shared system of behavioral conduct that enables collaboration and progress. Category C teams build their skyscraper on a foundation of sand.

Of course, if you hang out in Category B or C too long, you will likely end up in Category D, which means the environment is not peaceful and there is no progress. Teams in Category D are likely to suffer high rates of expensive turnover, become unprofitable, and eventually die out.



Where is your team?

Maybe it changes day to day. Don't worry if the answer is not Category A - that's why I wrote this book! I have worked with many teams not in Category A and rode the wave as it changed for better or for worse. As a leader, I figured out how, with the help from this ethical system, to reach Category A. Teams that study, understand, and implement this system of ethics in their day-to-day work will reach Category A. This is the place from which you grow sustainably.

Let's study and practice how to reach and remain in Category A.

When the leader sets the tone for peace and progress through action, the team follows suit. However, peace and progress cannot just be preached by the leader to take effect. Peace and progress must be cultivated through a specific leadership mindset, behaviors, and actions. Action toward peace and progress comes from studying, understanding, and implementing the ten ethical principles I present in the guidebook. Throughout the guidebook, we will practice how to move toward Category A regardless of where you feel you stand

now. If you feel you're in Category A already, the system will provide additional actions for how to remain in Category A. Leadership ethics is a universal, shared set of guidelines for behavior that enable peaceful collaboration and sustainable progress. The Awake Ethics system sets a new standard for ethical behavior beyond civility and basic moral conduct. As leaders of our work and our life we also must progress and help others on our team to progress as well. Progress is not sustainable without a foundation of peace amongst the team.



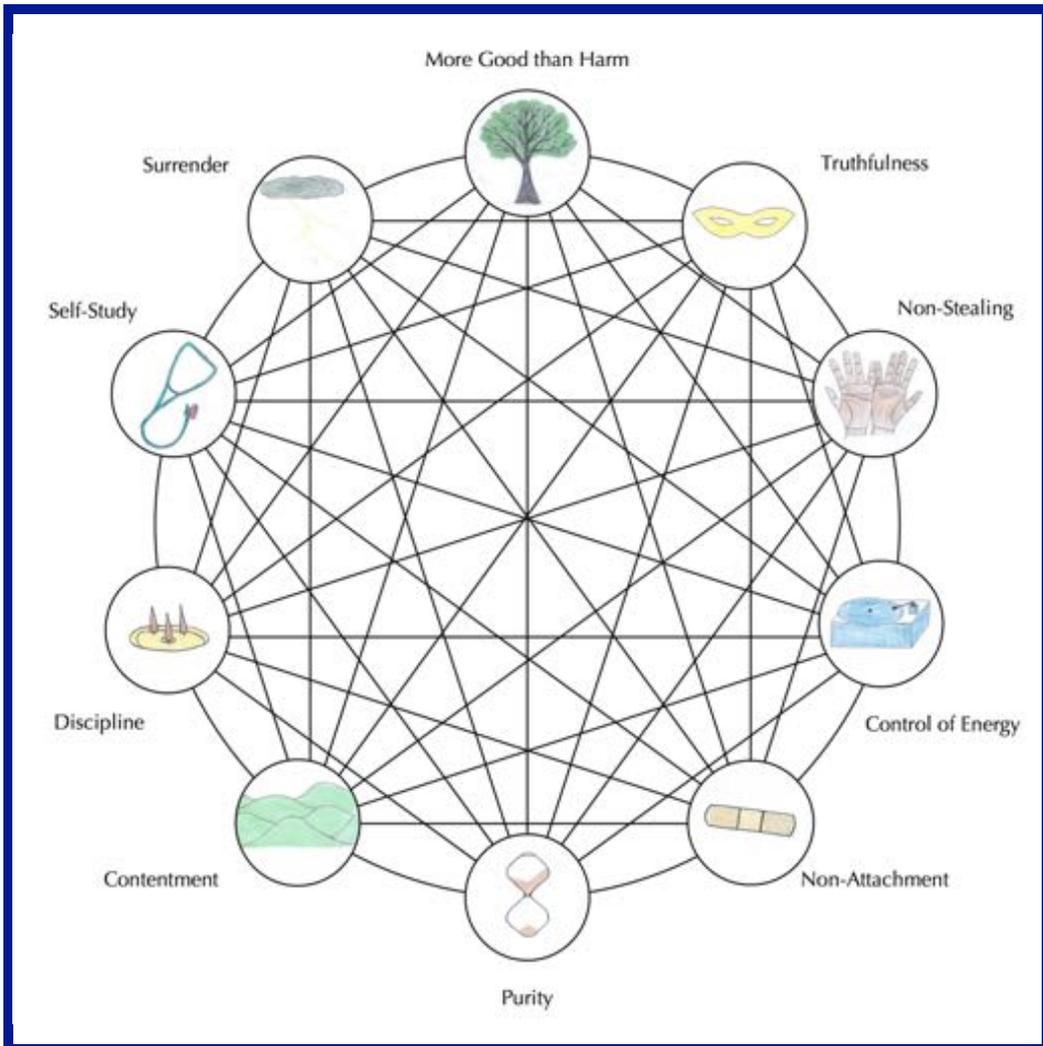
The 10 Principles

The Awake Ethics system is composed of ten principles that help leaders cultivate both peace and progress. The ten principles give us a common language for ethical behaviors that result in human-centered progress. When there is no common language, behavior gets messy and people get confused and frustrated. There is no clear way to communicate what the root cause of abstract problems or conflicts are. Have you found this to be true? A framework of principles enables alignment, focus, and clear communication. I have found these principles to be universal because, through my range of experience across many types of jobs, I have seen them aid in decision-making and cultivate both peace and progress.

On the following page, you'll find an overview of the ten principles in order. We'll zoom in on each principle in depth throughout the guidebook.

The first four principles are ethical practices for interactions, which enable peaceful and productive collaboration. We begin our journey with the principle of Truthfulness, which probably feels familiar to most of us. Then things start to get a bit new and different as we study principles two through four. Principles five

The Awake Ethics Principles



through nine are ethical practices toward ourselves. They are practices of personal conduct that help us reach our highest potential and lead by example. We conclude with the tenth principle: More Good than Harm. This tenth principle is an ethical practice toward ourselves, others, and the world.

Though the principles are presented in a specific order because they logically build on each other and take us through a carefully designed progression, they are all interconnected. Each situation you encounter as a leader may prompt you to use one or more of the principles in conjunction. I suggest working through the sections in the order that I present them but you will find that different sections and exercises speak to your needs and interests at different times during your journey. So, feel free to spend more time and go more in-depth in the areas you prefer. If it sparks your interest and curiosity, it's most likely to stick in your mind and be readily applicable in your work and life. If you identify a need and an application, it's more likely to be manifested in practice.



Working through the Guidebook

Before officially moving on to Part 2: The Ten Principles, let's look at how Part 2 is structured. Each section in Part 2 is dedicated to one of the ten principles. Each section contains an Introduction, Stories from the Field, All in Balance, and Exercises.

Principle Introduction

Each section begins with a brief introduction to the principle. This introduction provides the theory and motivation behind why the principle is important in leadership practice.

Stories from the Field

After the introduction, I present my Stories from the Field. I explain real-life examples that illustrate how the principles have come into play and have helped leaders approach ethical challenges. These stories illustrate common leadership challenges in action to bring the principles to life.

All in Balance

Stories from the Field are followed by a brief All in Balance section. As with any practice, we can overdo it. The All in Balance section explains the implications of overdoing a certain practice and how to stay in check.

The Exercises: Reflection and Actions

Each section contains exercises for putting the principles into action. We often receive a lot of great ideas, advice, and insights but don't quite have the bridge in place to begin using them. The exercises throughout the book are designed to help you start using the principles and integrate them into your leadership of your work and life. The exercises in each section contain two components: a Reflection component and an Actions component.

The Reflections are important because you have to believe in the importance of the principle, by understanding how it plays into your own life before doing the exercises with your team.

As far as the Actions, there are both Individual and Team Exercises. In Awake Ethics, the Individual exercises go a bit deeper. This guidebook is for advanced rising leaders that truly want to deepen their leadership practice in their work and their lives. In many cases, you may read the exercises but decide to skim over them. I would suggest putting aside time to really sit, reflect, and actually write something down. Writing something down is how you start to think in new ways and understand the material. Its like reading an article about how vegetables and green juices are good for you and accepting it as true. However, you go to the grocery store, look at the produce, and then go to the frozen section to buy another case of instant Alfredo pasta and have that for dinner. You can't really know or say that you know the positive effects of vegetables and green juices without experiencing them. You can't know that it is true or that it works without experiencing it. Nothing will change if you don't choose an action and try putting it into real practice. Also, if you attempt to do the exercises with distractions around you, you'll be tempted to skim over them. It takes discipline to take the time to work through them but it is worth it!



The Pace

A book is my favorite way to learn because we can read and work through it on our own time and at our own pace! Books are truly an incredible invention. We don't have to show up at a specific time or place or work at the pace of others. If we want to go back and review or do a section twice or more times, we can. If we want to pause and take a week off, we can. It's freeing and also realistic since we all have different schedules and learning paces. Please see the Author's Notes at the end for a more detailed suggested timeline for working through the guidebook.

Ready? Let's get started!

The 10 Principles

