Ethical Dilemma: My Personal Experience In Solving

When I was 19 years old, I was back at home for the summer after my freshman year of college. My older brother had come to visit our parents and me. He didn't live too far away, only about a 45-minute drive, so his visit was nothing out of the ordinary for us. Later that day during his visit he pulled me aside and asked me for a favor, he told me he was tight for money, which sadly has never been out of the normal for my brother and was not the first time he had asked me for money. He told me how his kids, who were not that much younger than me, being 17, 15, and 12 respectively, needed money for going to vacation bible school and he didn't have enough money. So, he asked me for 60 dollars so that they could go to vacation bible school and told me he would pay me back the following week. I obliged and gave him 100 dollars. When it came to family and friends borrowing money, I almost always give more than they ask for because I don't charge interest obviously, and in my mindset, it is better to give them more than they need to make sure they are covered, and if they don't need it, they simply won't spend it and will give the money back later. I did not think my brother would be staying at our parents' house for too much longer, so I had made plans to hang out with my friends later that day. Later that afternoon, with my parents, his kids, and me in the room, he asked my mom the exact same thing. He gave my mom the exact same story, right in front of me. Not only to make this worse, but his kids are also getting excited about this. So, my mom decides she will give him 60 dollars if they wash all the windows in the house, and for some reason I am roped into this situation and I have to clean as well. This was because my mom deemed that my two nieces and my nephew, would not do an adequate job on their own, and they need help being on ladders to reach windows that are higher up on the walls. Even though they had no worries personally being 4 feet up on a ladder, and my mom would have had no issue with me doing this by myself at their age, I realized there was no arguing with my mother on this. My mom has always had a soft spot when it came to her grandchildren and while it may seem unfair, it was just the relationship she had with them.

So somehow, I was forced to work to help my brother earn money from my mom for the same exact thing in which I had previously lent money to him that day, instead of hanging out with my friends. Now here is where my choice came in, my ethical dilemma.

Right now, I must choose in my mind whether I tell my mom about what my brother Jamie had done. Asking her for money for the same exact thing he had asked me for less than two hours prior. Or do I try and pretend this did not happen and ignore the situation for now and tell her another day, not allowing me to go out with my friends and having to work instead. In this situation, there is little moral temptation, just two rights that are equally hard to pick from. The only thing that I believe could be argued as a moral temptation in this situation is that I could potentially get out of the situation if I played my cards right and go hang out with my friends. However, that particular idea made little to no impact on my decision on how to handle this situation, so I was back to two ethical choices to choose from. On one hand, if I choose to tell my mom, she will go off on my brother, right in front of his kids, most likely hurting the relationship with his kids. At the same time, I am preventing my mom from getting manipulated for money. The other option is not saying anything and preserving the relationships within the family by not causing tension or arguments, however I am letting my mother get scammed. Both decisions are what I would consider right moral choices, however, they will have negative

externalities regardless of the decision I make.

In this specific situation, it could be argued that three paradigms could be applicable. The first potentially applicable paradigm would be Truth vs. Loyalty, the truth being telling my mom what my brother had done, a justifiable, ethical choice. Loyalty, being the loyalty to my brother and his kids by not exposing him in front of his three children.

The next potentially applicable paradigm would be Short term vs. Long term. On the short term, it would be right to correct this wrong situation and inform my mom of what he did. While in the long term it may be better to stay silent to preserve relationships, as people would not forget this. Both decisions are right decisions but hard to pick from, thus fitting an ethical dilemma. (Kidder, 2009) While the argument could be made this paradigm fits, I think it is far from the best fitting model.

The last potential paradigm that could fit the case would be the Individual vs. Community, this would be applicable if you classify my brother as the individual and the rest of the family as the community (kidder, 2009). While I think the argument could be made that this paradigm could be applicable, I think its claim is weak in comparison to the Truth vs. Loyalty paradigm and that would be the best fitting model for this case. In my opinion it represents my ethical dilemma the best because of how it accompanies my thought process as well as my care-based decision at the time. It set a standard for how I would make a logical decision that could have a major impact on others depending on what I decided.

After careful consideration, trying to manage my emotions and think as logically as I could, I decided that in this moment it was best to not tell my mother and wait until another day to do so. This way my mom would know the truth and could rectify the situation, and my nieces and nephew would never find out. I came to this decision using a care-based thinking model, I wanted to put myself into everyone’s shoes to try and think how they would react depending on what I did.(Kidder, 2009) When it comes to conflict within family this is usually the model I would tend to follow, rather than rule-based thinking or utilitarianism. In my mind the decision I derived from this decision making process would cause the least negative externalities. However, this decision did not go fully as planned. Since I decided not to tell my mom I was still forced to continue helping my nieces and nephew clean all the windows of the house. After about an hour or so, I was growing frustrated and my frustration was more visible than I thought. My dad had taken notice of this and pulled me aside to talk and told me that I was acting unusual and wanted to know if anything was going on. I considered for a moment what I would say, and I thought to myself, my dad is usually very good keeping calm, and could probably help resolve the situation. So, I explained the situation to him, and he told me I had made a good decision, continue to keep cleaning and he would handle the situation. So eventually we finished, and I went out later with my friends. The next day I woke up and went downstairs to make breakfast and my mom came up to me in the kitchen and told me she was sorry, and she had no idea about what my brother had did. She told me after everyone had left the house dad had explained the situation to her. She also informed me she had not called my brother out on the issue yet because she wanted to make sure it did not seem like I ratted out my brother. We came up with the plan that if my brother did not pay me back within the next week, she would call him out on it, claiming she asked me why I had withdrawn 100 dollars from my bank account and was that I had told her Jamie borrowed money from me.

Come a week later, he had not paid me back and she called him out on the situation, she was

quite angry with him and he forced him to pay both of us back. In the end it seemed the situation had worked out the best it possibly could have. If I were to go back and do it all over again, I think that I would make the same decision I did, even if my dad had not intervened. While this may not be the decision everyone would have made, I think it was the best for my family in the long term.

References

1. Kidder, R. M. (2009). How good people make tough choices: resolving the dilemmas of ethical living. New York: Harper.