

Stand Up, Speak Out: The Practice and Ethics of Public Speaking

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Chapter 2

Ethics Matters: Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

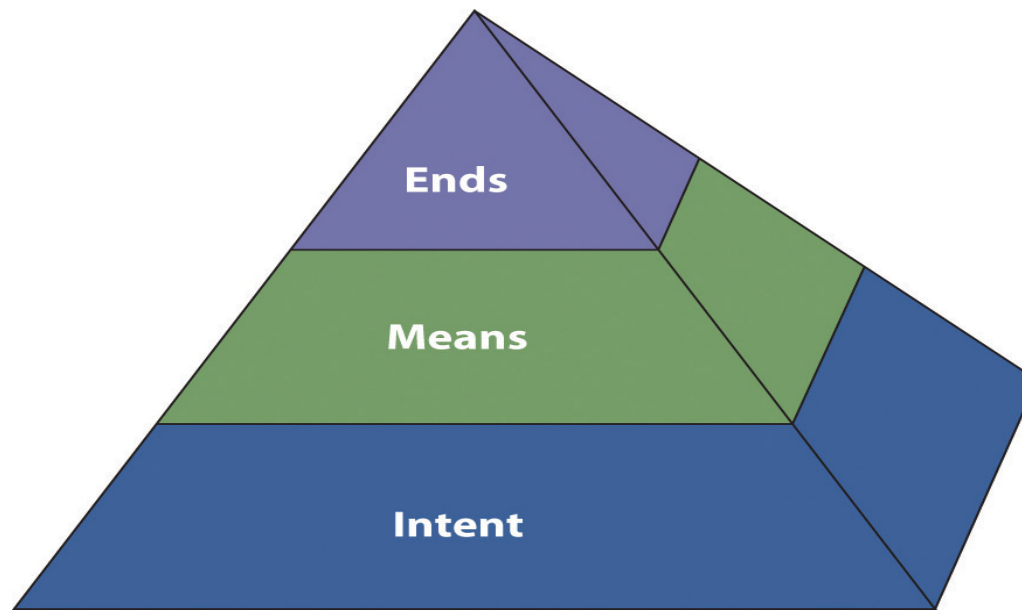
- Explain how the three levels of the ethics pyramid might be used in evaluating the ethical choices of a public speaker or listener.
- Understand how to apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication within the context of public speaking.
- Understand how you can apply ethics to your public speaking preparation process.
- Define the concept of free speech and discuss its origins.
- Discuss the First Amendment to the US Constitution in terms of free speech.
- Describe how free speech relates to other freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

Sections 2.1 & 2.2

Ethics Today & The Ethics Pyramid

The Ethics Pyramid

- A model developed by Elspeth Tilley, proposes three basic concepts: intent, means, and ends.



Intention

- Similarly, an ethical listener keeps an open mind, listening to the speaker before making judgments.
- One way to assess intent is to seek feedback from others; how ethical do they think a behavior or a remark is?
- A second way to assess intent is to check out existing codes of ethics.
- Third, consider whether a behavior is beneficial for the majority, or whether you would approve of the same behavior from someone else.
- Sometimes people can engage in unethical behavior unintentionally; plagiarism often occurs when a speaker uses a phrase or content, forgetting that he or she read it in someone else's work.

Means

- Means are the tools or behaviors we use to achieve a desired outcome.
 - We have choices about which means to employ in persuading others.
 - Threats and other forms of manipulation are unethical behaviors.
 - Making a respectful request is ethical.

Ends

- The outcomes you hope to achieve, say McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond (2002).
- Some end results could be good for the source (speaker) but bad for the receiver (listener).
- An example would be persuading audience members to buy something they don't actually want.
- Your goal should be chosen according to ethical standards you and your audience expect from each other.

Why the Pyramid Matters

- Understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid.
- Tilley recommends testing the ethics of a given behavior by asking:
 - “Have I discussed the ethicality of the behavior with others and come to a general consensus that the behavior is ethical?”
 - “Does the behavior adhere to known codes of ethics?”
 - “Would I be happy if the outcomes of the behavior were reversed and applied to me?”

Section 2.3

Ethics in Public Speaking

The NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

- A statement of their values about ethics in human communication.

Nine Principles of Ethical Communication

Principle 1

- Truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason.

Principle 2

- Freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent.

Principle 3

- Understanding of, and respect for, other communicators before passing judgment.

Principle 4

- Access to communication resources and opportunities for the purpose of promoting the well-being of families, communities, and society.

Principle 5

- Communication climates of caring, mutual understanding, and respect.

Principle 6

- Condemnation of distortion, intimidation, coercion, violence intolerance, hate speech, violence, or other behavior that degrades people.

Principle 7

- Support for the expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.

Principle 8

- Advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings while respecting privacy and confidentiality.

Principle 9

- Responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our communication.

Section 2.4

Free Speech

What is Free Speech

- “The right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) esp. as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution” (*Merriam Webster’s Dictionary of Law*).

Why is Free Speech Important for Public Speakers?

- Expressing information and ideas is the purpose of public speaking.
- Free speech allows us, as audience members, to hear and consider multiple points of view so we can make more informed decisions.

The First Amendment to the Constitution

Free Speech is Solidified in the Bill of Rights

- “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Limitations to Free Speech

- 2007 Supreme Court decision in the *Morse et al. v. Frederick* case or the “Bong Hits for Jesus” case.
- Free speech is constantly being debated by politicians, judges, and the public, even within the United States, where this right has been discussed for over two-hundred years.