

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

In advance of the meeting, each participant should reflect on the following, and make some personal notes (not to be shared) to bring to the meeting.

1. What are my hopes related to this question:

2. What are my fears related to this question?

3. What are my biases related to this question? (biases are hard to identify; try to be honest)

Spend some time identifying your top one or two hopes, fears and biases. Bring these to the meeting, ready to share. All will respectfully listen as each person shares. No one will comment.



Values-Based Discernment

Dignity Health’s founders are women religious, for whom contemplation and action are linked in every decision. That tradition has come down to us in the way we go about making important, values-based decisions, specifically in the use of a discernment process that requires significant aspects of the decision be weighed in the light of our core values....This process is especially important when decisions are complex, or when the values involved may conflict. When issues...arise between Dignity Health and its partners, we expect all to contribute to a decision that serves the common good.

- Dignity Health’s Statement of Common Values

SAMPLE VALUES QUESTIONS

Mission

- How does this proposal fit within our organizational mission of healing, advocacy and partnering for improved community health?

Dignity

- Who will be affected by this proposal, both inside and outside the organization?
- Who of these has direct influence in the decision-making process?
- Can we provide for input and influence by people who will be most affected?
- Can we mitigate the effect of this decision on people who are negatively affected by it?
- How does this decision recognize all dimensions of the human person—body, mind, spirit?
- Does this proposal contribute in some way to the common good?
- Does this proposal promote healing?

Collaboration

- How do we collaborate with the proposed parties to create and sustain mission and values for the new organization that honor Dignity Health's legacy?
- What mechanisms can we put in place to ensure that Dignity Health retains adequate talent and resources to manage the ongoing relations?
- Will employees having a voice in the conditions of their work?

Stewardship

- What organizational resources—money, personnel, space, technology, management time—are involved in the proposal?
- How does the decision benefit our organization financially (directly or indirectly, long term or short term)?
- Who will benefit?
- Who will bear the burden?
- Will resources be diverted from some other use?
- How do we ensure compliance with the law?

Justice

- Does this decision directly affect those who are poor, unemployed, disadvantaged in some way?
- Will this decision strengthen or weaken our voice in advocacy?
- Does this decision seem fair?

Excellence

- What does this proposal do to promote high quality work?
- Will this decision enhance or risk our reputation? What can we do to protect it?
- Are there structured opportunities to improve our work built in to this proposal?

There may be other relevant values to consider when making a decision. Discussion of values, and specific questions tailored to reflect them, need not be limited to these.

Values-Based Discernment Process

“He was surprised to learn he had been speaking prose all his life.”

Moliere, The Imaginary Invalid

Like the character in Moliere's play, most of us use our values in making decisions every day and may be surprised to learn that there is a special process called Values-Based Decision Making. The difference between our ordinary decision making and this one is in three areas.

Collaborative. Not every decision that executives make needs a genuinely multi-disciplinary examination. We prize leaders who can size up a situation and, thinking with the values of the organization, come to a decision to act in a timely manner. Some decisions, however, because of their complexity or impact, are best made in conversation with others. When it's important that a range of viewpoints is considered, the Values-Based Discernment Process may be helpful.

Reflective. Especially when an organization's core values are at stake, and when a decision at hand makes it likely that our core values may conflict or appear to conflict, it's important to give reflective time to a decision, so that our first convictions are not our only ones. When a decision seems obvious but may involve conflicting values, it's even more important to slow down enough to invite the “second thought” to surface.

Explicit. Big decisions—ones that affect many people or involve much in the way of resources or seem more directly to touch an organization's core values—will be scrutinized more carefully than more routine decisions, by ourselves, by the government, by the public. For this reason, an explicit decision process is a good way to be sure all the bases have been covered, and it can serve as a record of our thinking when the rationale behind a decision is questioned.

Here are some examples of when a leader may choose to utilize the formal Values-Based Discernment Process:

- When significant resources—either human or financial—will be affected by a decision, a leader may utilize the process to be sure the decision has been reviewed from a values perspective by experts other than ones in the leader's field.
- When a partnership opportunity presents itself that has the potential to affect a fundamental aspect of Dignity Health's mission, the process may be used in advance of a Board or Sponsorship Council meeting to invite a multi-disciplinary group to examine its impact on the mission, values and responsibilities of the organization.
- When a program or partnership that is strongly associated in employees' or the public's mind with the basic mission of the organization will end or transition.
- Any time a significant decision affects not only the business of the organization but its values or when options inherent in a decision may result in a conflict between or among core values.

PROCESS

A Values-Based Discernment Process is not an ordinary problem-solving meeting. What distinguishes it is dedicated time for reflection on the values implications of any decision. Since values are implicit in any decision, this process asks us to make them *explicit*. Here is an outline of the basic process:

1. Preparation
 - Focus and frame the question. What exactly will the group consider?
 - Distribute to participants a summary of factual or objective description, with outline of question to be discussed.
 - Offer to answer factual questions in advance, via email or phone.
 - Participants complete reflection exercise in advance of meeting, and be prepared to share (exercise is on a separate page following).
 - Develop values questions particular to the decision at hand, using subject matter expertise with mission department help.
2. Welcome
3. Reflective Exercise (see last page): each participant selects top one or two items from each category (hopes, fears, biases) and shares. Group listens without discussion.
4. Brief overview of the facts; all participants should receive fact digest well in advance of the meeting and have all factual questions answered before the meeting.
5. Discussion of values questions.
6. Silent reflection.
7. Tap voting for consensus; revisiting points of difference.
8. Landing the plane: after sufficient discussion, group makes a recommendation that honors the most salient values. Just as important, group addresses the values that didn't "win the day" to see how any negative impact on them can be mitigated.
9. Evaluation of the process.

GROUND RULES

The more (appropriate) disciplines are represented, the richer the discussion.

Every voice is important. No one person's voice is authoritative, regardless of the position that person holds in the organization. Values-Based Discernment relies on a group of concerned persons thinking together and equally about a challenging situation.

Careful listening and openness to another view is essential to a positive outcome. Pontificating and speechifying are not helpful.

During this dialogue, no piece of information, no one's perspective and no suggestion for action should be censored. It is possible that someone will offer a piece of irrelevant information, but better to cast the net widely than to miss something important.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

The leader's role in this process is to:

- Select a broad range of participants, a small enough group to have meaningful dialogue but large enough to contain multiple perspectives, especially perspective that may differ from the leader's own.
- Determine who is making the decision; if the group doing the reflective process is different from the decision making group or person, leader should make clear the reason for the reflective process.
- Prepare (or have prepared) a digest of the relevant facts of the situation, in a way that will be accessible to the group and verifiable by others. Debated facts derail a process.
- Prepare (with help from mission colleagues) questions specific to the decision at hand, using the Dignity Health core values or other values relevant to the decision. See below for samples, which may or may not be useful in any particular decision.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The facilitator's role in this process is to:

- Stand back from the *content* of the decision and be sure participants are:
 - ◆ Listening to one another
 - ◆ Focusing on the values aspect of the questions
 - ◆ Resisting the temptation to discuss assumptions or relevant facts
 - ◆ Keeping track of time
- Welcome participants; introduce participants if they don't all know each other.
- Lead the process, including the hopes, fears, biases reflection at the beginning.
- Build in time for silent reflection, so that participants can hear and integrate all values perspectives.
- Tap the group for consensus, using techniques that will not lend the group to "majority rules" but to hear the convergences in the discussion, as well as the serious sticking points.
- Help bring group to consensus.
- Lift up the values that may have been subordinated in the recommendation; ask group to address.
- Sum up where the group lands—what has been clarified, what remains open or in need of further reflection.

THE ROLE OF THE PARTICIPANT

The participant's role in this process is to:

- Bring an open mind to the conversation.
- Bring to the group both a concern for the general good of the organization as well as the participant's expertise in his or her domain.
- Help uncover potential conflicts of values and ways to manage or mitigate the conflicts.
- Focus on the relevance of decision to the overall mission of the organization.

THE ROLE OF THE SCRIBE

The scribe's role in this process is to:

- Take notes to:
 - ◆ record date, topic, and names of participants in the process
 - ◆ capture the points of agreement or consensus; capture the points of stress or tension
 - ◆ document any recommendation along with the rationale