

**Dr. Lisa Lehmann:** Hi, this is Lisa Lehmann. I'm the Executive Director of the National Center for Ethics in Health Care for the VA. It's my pleasure today to welcome Professor Mary Gentile to our IntegratedEthics Improvement Forum kickoff event in honor of Compliance and Ethics Week. National Compliance and Ethics Week is co-sponsored by the Office of Compliance and Business Integrity, CBI, and the National Center for Ethics in Health Care through our IntegratedEthics program. The CBI program is committed to achieving the highest standards of business integrity, while the IntegratedEthics program enhances ethics quality. This event today is closely aligned to the VA I CARE core values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. Our commitment to these values ensures that we provide the best possible care and services to veterans and their families.

Professor Mary Gentile is a Professor of Practice at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business. She is the creator of Giving Voice to Values, which is a pioneering curriculum for values-driven leadership that has been piloted in over 960 business schools and organizations globally. She's also the author of the award-winning book, *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right*. Professor Gentile has been a passionate advocate for getting people to change the question we ask from, "Is something right or wrong?" to, "What if we want to act on our values? What should I say or do to insure that our values are expressed in our actions?" This shift in thinking has significant implications for our National Center for Ethics in Health Care Initiative on moral distress and our thinking within the VA about how we can encourage employees, veterans and families to speak up when they have ethical concerns.

So please join me in welcoming Professor Gentile to our IntegratedEthics Improvement Forum.

**Dr. Mary Gentile:** Lisa, thank you very much, and I'm really delighted to be able to share a bit today with you and with your colleagues on this call. So, I'm honored at the opportunity. And to all of you on the call, I'm going to be sharing a bit with you today about Giving Voice to Values. As Lisa said, it's a new approach to values-driven leadership development. And what I hope to do is to spend the first part of this call explaining to you what Giving Voice to Values or GVV, as I refer to it, is, and then I would like to talk a little bit about how you might implement it in your own practices and your experience, maybe share a few examples. And then at the end of our call, hopefully there'll be some time to discuss some of your questions or your suggestions and comments.

So, as I said, Giving Voice to Values is an innovative approach to values-driven leadership development. It was created — we created it for use in business schools because that was my experience. I spent 10 years at Harvard Business School. I helped design and teach in their first required courses on values and ethics and leadership. And then since then I've worked at a number of business schools. I'm currently at the University of Virginia Darden, as Lisa said, and I also have advised and consulted to other business schools around the world.

But what's interesting is that although this approach was developed as a curriculum for use in business schools, it's actually grown well beyond that. And we are now seeing organizations and educational institutions both using this approach on all seven continents around the world. It's being used by many businesses. It's being used in the non-profit sector. We've worked with the U. S. military. We've worked with the Australian Police Force. We've done programs for — relevant to you, of course. We've done programs with various healthcare, educational, as well as practitioner settings around the world. It's being used in some nursing and physician education programs. So and, as well as, law and engineering, etcetera.

So I'm hoping that although much of my experience and examples draw from business, I am beginning to work with folks across professions and definitely one of the great privileges of this work is that I get to meet with individuals such as yourselves and learn about how this approach could be useful to you. So, I hope it will be — I offer it up in that spirit.

As I often like to tell people, the Giving Voice to Values approach, for me, grew out of something that I call a crisis of faith. I'd been working in the field of values-driven leadership and ethics and business and other organizational settings for several decades, and around the late 90s, early 2000s, I had this crisis of faith. I began to think that what we were doing was, you know, at best futile and at worst, perhaps unethical in its own way because we were spending a lot of time addressing values, conflicts, and ethical issues as if they were entirely a cognitive problem, as if they were entirely a challenge of understanding. And if only people had the right set of rules, the right frameworks, the right analytic models, it would all be solved because the real challenge was people just didn't know what was right.

Now, of course, there are many circumstances where what the right thing to do is unclear, and certainly in the work you all do around healthcare that's very true. But, nevertheless, there are a huge number of issues where most of us actually do think we know what's appropriate, what's right, but it's not easy to act on it. And so, my attention in this approach and in this work is really on that second category. And I actually think that if we get better at being able to talk about it constructively and influence and act on the times when we do know what we think the right thing to do is, I think two things will happen with those other areas. I think a lot of times we end up thinking something is unclear, simply because we don't think it's possible to act on it. So I think that will begin to address that issue. And I also think that just by getting better and talking about values when they're clear, we'll be able to have more constructive, less combative, more true problem-solving conversations, even in those areas where there is a lack of clarity. So that's really where my attention is focused.

What I'm going to talk about today is, I'm going to talk about the new question that Lisa referred to that GVV tries to ask and answer and the research that it's based on. I'm going to talk about what I call the three A's of values-driven leadership and ethics in organizations. I'm going to talk about the Giving Voice to Values thought experiment, which is basically the mechanism that we use — the pedagogical technology, if you will, that we use for helping people to better act on their values. And we're going to talk about the three GVV or Giving Voice to Values flips, or reversals — three ways that we've shifted how we think about values and ethics. We've shifted what it is we're talking about when we talk about values and ethics. We've shifted who it is we think we're talking to, and we've shifted how we have that

conversation. So, I'm going to cover those things and then as I said, at the end, I'd like to talk about some specific strategies and tips that might be useful to you — that I hope will be useful to you.

So first of all, in terms of a different question, as Lisa said, Giving Voice to Values is about asking not what is the right thing to do — that's an important question, it's a good question, it's one that I'm sure you all have thought about in many different circumstances. But we're actually talking about once you know what you believe is right, how can you get it done effectively. And the reason that we made this shift has to do with a number of strands of research that I started to become aware of about 10 years ago when I started developing this approach.

The first thing that kind of caught my eye was there were a couple of different studies done by two different scholars, Douglas Huneke and Perry London, where they were trying to look at why some people are able to act and behave with great conviction on their values even in times of very high risks, high stakes. And both of these scholars independently decided that they wanted to do a qualitative research study where they would identify populations of people who'd acted with this kind of moral conviction in very dangerous circumstances, and they both independently decided they were going to interview the populations more often referred to as “rescuers” from World War II. So these are people who had, you know, acted to try and help folks who were endangered from the Holocaust, often at great risk to themselves, even when many other people did not do so.

And so, they identified a population of these people and they both independently did these qualitative in-depth interviews with these folks and true enough, of course, they identified a number of characteristics that they thought these types of people did in fact share, and most of them really didn't stick with me, to be honest. But there was one characteristic that they both identified that I remembered reading about and that kind of stuck with me, probably because I was an educator, and it was this: it was — they said that the folks who had acted with this kind of courage and conviction in these times of high stakes, all expressed that at an earlier point in their lives, usually as a young adult, they'd had the experience of rehearsing out loud, “What would you do if?” and then various kinds of moral conflicts. They'd had the experience of literally pre-scripting and rehearsing and they — they did this — it was an experience both at the cognitive level but also at the behavioral level. So, at the cognitive level they were identifying the value that mattered to them, they were putting an articulation to it. But at the behavioral level they were literally speaking it, voicing it, out loud to someone more senior to them — a parent, a boss, a teacher, a mentor, someone who stood in as proxy for the kind of person they might need to communicate with in the actual circumstances. And so they were having this experience at these two levels, this literal rehearsal, and I thought that was kind of an interesting idea.

So we began to look at other kinds of research. We did two kinds of exploration. One kind was simply we spoke to a lot of people and gathered — and I was focusing in business, and gathered stories of asking people to tell us about a time when your own values conflicted with something you were explicitly asked or implicitly pressured to do, but you found a way to act on your own values effectively. And, so people started sharing those stories with us, but they also shared stories of times when they failed to act on their values effectively. So, that was the first kind of exploration we did.

The other kind was that we started looking at the research from a number of different disciplines and interviewing scholars in different areas. And as I said, this was about 10 years ago, there was beginning

to be a lot of research in a number of different disciplines that suggested that if you want to have an impact on people's behavior, that rehearsal, practice, pre-scripting, clear coaching are effective ways to do that.

Now, there's even more research now, but what we were seeing was that, for example, in the field of psychology, many of you are probably familiar with some of the research that's come out, popularizations of research more recently around habit formation, for example. There's also a strand of research that I'm sure you've heard of, which is often termed the study of positive deviance, meaning we study folks who deviate from the norm, but in a positive direction. The folks who do that research have coined a phrase — this is not my phrase, it's theirs, but I think it's instructive — the positive deviance folks will say that if you want to impact people's behavior, rather than asking them to *think* their way into a different way of *acting*, it's more effective to ask them to *act* their way into a different way of *thinking*. And that's really an idea that's at the heart of GVV. We also spoke with folks who were scholars in the field of neuroscience — cognitive neurosciences, not my field, but we spoke to experts in those fields. And they talked to us about some of the recent research around brain plasticity, around creating new neuro-pathways, for example, and how suggestive this was around the idea of practice and rehearsal.

But the research that I like to cite, because I think that it's memorable and it really captures this idea metaphorically, is from the field of kinesthetics, the study of physical movement, and so I'm going to just tell you a little story, because I think, you know, it'll help you remember the idea I'm talking about. So, back in the day when I was working at Harvard Business School, I decided to take a self-defense class. Now, I had never in my life felt the need to take a self-defense class until I went to Harvard Business School. I think there might be some connections there. But anyway, I looked around the city of Boston and there were a lot of these classes, and they all teach pretty much the same thing. They will teach you the physical moves, you know — fist-bridge-of-nose and heel-to-instep, knee-to-groin, and they have you practice these moves in the air, and the idea is now if anyone ever attacks me, I know what to do.

And so most of the classes were framed this way, but there was one course that was different. It was called Model Mugging, and it was a developmental model, so they would still teach you all those moves and you'd practice them in the air. But then at a certain point, they'd bring in a gentleman in a padded suit, like the Michelin man. And they would line us all up and we would take turns getting attacked full-force and then we would have the chance to use these moves on another individual, full-force, you know, who was protected. And the idea behind this was something I'm sure many of you are familiar with, especially those who are athletes, but the idea they explained to us was that, it's something called “specific-state muscle memory.” So, the idea being that if you rehearse something in the same physiological and emotional and cognitive state that you'll be in when you need to use it, that even if you freeze in the moment, your body will remember.

So one day, I'm in this class and I'm laying on my floor on my back because I'd failed to protect myself, and I'm thinking “Gee, you know, could you create a kind of moral muscle memory?” Could you create a default behavior, a default to voice, but not just to speaking up, not just “Oh, that's wrong,” but to informed voice. Because of one of the things I was observing from all these conversations I was having with many different people at many different levels and organizations is that the arguments, what I call

the reasons and rationalizations that we encounter when we experience values conflicts or ethical conflicts, they're pretty repetitious pretty quickly. They're powerful, but they're not unassailable, and that there would be, I thought, perhaps some real merit in trying to unpack them and rehearse responses to them. Not specifically word-for-word, but just different ways of framing situations that would come in handy when we encounter these kinds of challenges. So that was kind of the core idea behind GVV — this little ah-ha moment. Gee, could we rehearse, could we practice, pre-script?

So once I, you know, saw all the research that suggested that might be a positive way to review or address these issues, I started to look at what do we actually do when we try and teach people or train people around values and ethics and ethical practice in organizational settings, whether they be business settings, legal settings, healthcare settings, etcetera. And then I got a little depressed again, because what I typically saw is that we would do two things. We would work on what we called awareness and analysis. So by awareness, what we meant is that we would expose people to a lot of scenarios that illustrated the kinds of values, conflicts, and ethical challenges that you might encounter given the work you do, given the population you work with, given the types of issues you encounter, given the kind of organization you're embedded in, given the legal and regulatory and budgetary context that you're operating in, even given the geographic or regional, global context that you're embedded in. So the idea was here that now when you encounter those situations, you'll recognize them as ethical conflicts, as values conflicts.

And of course, that's important, especially in a world where technology is changing rapidly, certainly in your work, in your fields, the things that you're capable of doing and the speed with which you're capable of doing them often develops faster than perhaps all of our norms and our guidelines for when it is appropriate to do those things and how to decide that. Certainly issues about information, security, and privacy are very relevant to your work, as well as to the folks I was working with in business settings and technology was having an impact on that, so building awareness was important.

But, it was necessary, but it wasn't sufficient, because many of the kinds of challenges that trouble us the most are challenges where we actually know what we think the right thing to do is, what we think is a fair thing, the compassionate thing, the responsible thing, even the honest thing to do is, but we are operating in circumstances where it may be very difficult to act on that, either because of individual pressures on us from our colleagues or our managers or our patients, or because of financial pressures on us, or other kind of organizational and cultural issues. So awareness is necessary but not sufficient.

The second thing we would typically do is we would teach analysis. And what this typically meant in an organizational setting is that you would learn all the necessary laws, regulations, rules, organizational policies and guidelines, value statements, etcetera, that were relevant to the work you do and the organization where you work, and then you would be confronted with various kinds of scenarios. And the exercise was to decide is this behavior over the line or within the line. And so there would be this kind of, as I said earlier, a cognitive analysis, you know, what can we do here?

In an academic setting, the approach is a little different. We still give people scenarios, but instead of giving them the relevant rules and laws of an organization or a profession, we may teach them models of ethical reasoning from philosophy — you know, consequentialism and duty-based thinking, etcetera. So I want to give a little story to illustrate that although this is hugely important, it's useful for people to

learn to think rigorously and consistently about values conflicts, again it's not sufficient. And the story I want to share is of a gentleman I interviewed, he was a CEO, an entrepreneur, and he told me that he'd been interviewing a candidate for a position recently and he said the guy had just graduated with an MBA from one of the top business schools in the U.S., and he asked this gentleman at the interview, "Did you take an ethics class when you were studying, management?" And the gentleman said, "Well, yes, it was required." The CEO said, "Well what did you learn?" So, this gentleman said, "Well, I learned all the models of ethical reasoning, you know, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and then I learned that if you encounter a values conflict, you decide what you want to do, and then you select the model of ethical reasoning that would best support what you want to do."

Now of course, this was not what the professor was hoping this gentleman would walk away from his class with, and certainly the CEO who was telling me this story was kind of teasing me, you know, because I was the "ethics lady," but there's a lot of truth to what he was saying. You know these models of ethical reasoning, by design, conflict. That's why they're actually valuable, because they help you see things from different perspectives, but they certainly don't tell you ultimately what's right. And even more importantly for what I'm talking about, once you decide what's right, they don't tell you how to get it done.

So unfortunately, in most of our ethics training, this is where we would stop. We would focus on awareness and analysis. And unfortunately what that sometimes leads to, unintentionally, is a kind of schooling for sophistry. Because the students or their managers, or whoever's in the ethics training, walk away understanding the issues are complex and it can be possible to justify almost any behavior with an ethical framework. They learn to be able to rationalize anything. And so, what we decided is that although these approaches are necessary, we do need to add further actions, and that's really where GVV, or Giving Voice to Values, comes in.

And so we had to develop a different pedagogy, a different training and conversational technology, and we call it the GVV or the Giving Voice to Values thought experiment. And the idea here is that we'll be looking at a values conflict and we'll say not what would you do, because if we ask people what would you do, we typically get a couple different kinds of answers. We either get the people who would tell us, "Oh, I would do the right thing." They may genuinely mean that. But we also know from the research that many fewer people actually behave that way than say they will for a lot of different reasons. And, so we get some folks who will say that. We get other folks who perhaps because they want to be more honest or maybe just because they're playing devil's advocate will say, "Well, Mary, I know what you want me to say, but in the real world it's not possible to do that." And then you'll get a third group who will simply say, "I don't really think this is wrong," and they'll argue with the premise of your whole scenario or your whole question. So, any one of those three answers when you ask people, here's a situation, what would you do, any one of those three answers basically doesn't get you to the conversation I'm talking about, where we literally script an action plan, how to act on our values effectively.

And, so we decided we needed a different kind of teaching technology. So, we developed the GVV thought experiment or the GVV case scenarios, which are scenarios that end with a protagonist who has already decided what he or she thinks the right thing to do is. And the question is, "How could they get

it done?” And we've done this, you know what will they say to whom and then what would the pushback be. What would be the resistance or the risks, you know, that they're fearful of. And then given those, what would you say next, or what would you do next, and what data would you need to gather, and are there positive examples you can draw on, and are there individuals you could build a set of allies or a coalition, or are you going to do this individually, and is this a one-time conversation or is this really a systemic challenge which is going to require systemic effort, incremental effort over a period of time. So, basically, what we do is, we engage people in that literal scripting and action planning over time to practice and to rehearse and to peer-coach each other. So, that's basically the idea behind it.

Behind this is, it's a kind of model about how people experience these issues. And this is in fact based on some research. But the idea is that people are, you know, at their job working along, they've got their heads down, they're doing what they're supposed to do, and then something happens. Maybe you observe something. Maybe a colleague comes and asks you or a customer comes, a client comes and asks you for something. Maybe your boss asks you to do something. But you get that feeling in your gut that something's kind of dodgy, that this is not right. But before you can even think about how to address that, what we call the preemptive rationalizations will rush in. These are things like, maybe I don't have all the information, maybe this is just the way things are done in this organization, in this group with these individuals, in this part of the world, you know, etcetera. Maybe it is actually wrong, but you know, it's really not my responsibility. It's above my pay grade. Or maybe it's wrong, but if I tried to do something, I would probably just make it worse. I wouldn't help, and I may hurt myself or others in the process.

So, all of these preemptive rationalizations rush in, and many of them may be true, but the idea behind GVV or Giving Voice to Values is that we want to spread out the time between the moment you get that feeling in your gut that something's dodgy and the moment when all those rationalizations rush in, to just spread out that time to create a kind of safe space, a sort of laboratory, a creative laboratory to ask “what if.” Just what if you were going to act on this values-based position in this situation. How might you do that? We don't ask people what would you do. We ask them what if you were going to do this. And we try and create this safe space for brainstorming.

Most of the research on creativity and innovation will suggest to you that time pressure is the enemy of creativity in many cases, and that if you give people more time and you give them more space, they're going to have the freedom to be able to brainstorm to generate lots of ideas, to not throw out an idea before they've actually explored it just because they think it's not likely to work. They give themselves the chance to go down blind alleys, because those are often the places where you will see a new way of framing an issue. The other research this is based on is actually research on how people often will act based on sort of instinctive, emotional responses when they encounter various kinds of values conflicts. And then they will rationalize *post hoc* why it was actually an ethical thing to do, or why it was actually the only possible thing to do, or why the issue itself was gray or rather than more clear cut than people might have thought otherwise. So, there's a kind of *post hoc* rationalization.

The psychologist Jonathan Haidt calls it — he talked about the emotional tail that wags the rational dog. So, in other words, we act on the instinctive, unconscious, sort of emotional impulse and then later our

reason kicks in to justify that behavior. And, so some people will look at that and say therefore, there is no reason to try and train people or prepare for values-driven behavior. But what we've tried to do is to actually say no, that's why we want to create this thought experiment, because we're not — we're trying not to trigger that emotional response. I'm not asking you "What would you do?" I'm simply asking, "What if you were the protagonist in this situation, who wants to do 'X?' How might they get that done?" And the idea is that we never ask people what would you do until they actually feel like they have options. Because most of the time when I interviewed people about times when they had and had not acted on their values, when you asked them, "why didn't you when you didn't," they almost always said it was because they didn't think they had a choice. And so this is kind of the heart of GVV, this sort of thought experiment.

So, I mentioned that there were some three GVV flips or reversals. The first one I've already kind of alluded to. Many people will say it's not really worth it to talk about the so-called clear cut issues; you really should focus on the gray issues if you want to help people act ethically and act on their values, because the clear cut issues are easy. What I have concluded is that yes, there are a lot of gray issues in the world, and I frankly don't know what the right answer is to most of those things, but they're gray because reasonable people of good will and intelligence can often legitimately disagree. And if you speak only about those, you're going to spend all your time talking about how many angels dance on the head of a pin.

And so, what we wanted to do was to give people a chance to rehearse, to practice, to get more skillful at talking about their values and raising values issues. So, we chose scenarios where most people, not everyone, but most people would agree, you know, that's clearly over the line. And so, then you can actually get to the action question. And ironically, or productively, happily, once you start doing that, some of those gray issues start becoming more clear-cut to people, because they realize they were only characterizing them as gray because they didn't see any options.

We've also reversed who we think we're talking to. You know, often when I'll go into organizations, they'll say, you know, most of the people here are good people. We just have a few bad apples, and that's who the training is for. But I actually think of the audience for Giving Voice to Values differently. We think about the organization as a bell curve, and this is based on some research by the late Greg Dees and Peter Cramton on ethics and negotiations. But we identify that one tail end of the bell curve, or the folks who might self-identify as opportunists. These are the people who would say, "I will always do what's in my material self-interest, values be damned." No one falls into these categories all the time, but this is what people would say they're primarily motivated that way.

And then there is the group at the other tail end who would self-identify as idealists. Who would say, "I will always try and act on my values, regardless of my material self-interest." But what we premise is that the majority of us fall under the bell. I put myself there, and we call them pragmatists. And pragmatists we define as people who would say, "I would like to act on my values, as long as it doesn't put me at a systematic disadvantage." Now that's not the same as saying, "I know I will always succeed," or, "I know I'll never pay a price." It simply means, "I think I have a shot." And if you think of your audience that way, and you think of yourself that way, we're not really trying to change the opportunists. I believe they'll always be with us. And we're not so worried about the idealists; we just



want them to be more skillful. But we're really targeting the pragmatists, and we're saying, we want to give you the skills, we want to give you the little scripts and the tools to be who you already want to be at your best. We're not trying to change you; we're trying to empower you. And the third flip is how we do this, and I already described that. Instead of asking what's right, we ask how you get the right thing done.

Then I want to get to some specific tactics and tips that you might think about in your own work.

One of the things that I wanted to suggest in terms of tips and tactics is that, you know, often when you encounter a values conflict, there's kind of two kinds of challenges that I suspect you may often encounter. One is that it's not that — that even though you know what you believe is right, the people you're trying to address don't necessarily think they're doing the wrong thing; they don't agree with you about what is right. And so, that can be, you know a huge part of the challenge. And, you know, that's frankly the case most of the time; otherwise it would be a lot easier to do this.

And the other kind of challenge is that people can feel it's just too risky. I'm taking too many personal risks by doing this. And so, what we've done with GVV is we've actually looked at lots of times when people have and haven't acted on their values, and identified some of the things that can be helpful. So I'm just going to share some of those with you, and then hopefully share an example.

So, you know, first of all, I would always encourage you, first to yourself and then later to the people that you're trying to speak with or trying to influence, to frame whatever the choice at hand is in terms of the GVV thought experiment. In other words, ask yourself, not “Can I do this?” or “Will I do this,” but just ask yourself, “What if I wanted to do this? How could I make it possible? What might I say? What would be the pushback? Then what might I say?” In other words, think of your own preparation as post-decision making. Rather than thinking of yourself as making the decision, go to the values position that you already have and ask yourself “What if?” Not “Am I going to do this?” but “What if I were going to do this?”

Now once you do this, then there's a number of things that you can start to think about. And if you're a manager or a leader, it's also a way to conduct the conversation. Although we use GVV often as the training approach, managers also then just begin to use it in their team meetings or their individual mentoring sessions, where they will simply say to people, “Well, what if we were going to do this? How could we get it done?” So that people don't rush to a decision, because, when you rush to a decision there's often a kind of, as I said earlier, those preemptive rationalizations that kick in.

So one of the things we'll do is we'll say how can we make this more doable for people, and we have seven pillars in GVV. I'm not going to go through them all because our time is short, but you can find them on our website or in the books if you're curious. But let me just refer to a few of them. One of them is what I'm calling here, “Play to Your Strengths,” but the pillar is actually called “Self-Knowledge and Alignment.” And the idea behind it is, I used to think that in order to act on your values, you have to be kind of an extrovert, someone who's comfortable with argument, perhaps somebody who is, you know, a bit of a risk-taker, pretty comfortable in, you know, debate kinds of situations, very confident in their own position.

And for all of those reasons, I thought I was doomed, because I didn't see myself as any of those things. I saw myself as an introvert, as somewhat risk-averse, as not necessarily somebody who enjoyed arguing, although I've gotten better at that, and things like that. But then when I started gathering stories about people who acted or didn't act on their values, what I started to learn is that sure enough, the people who saw themselves as extroverts and risk-takers and a little more assertive, would say that the reason they act on their values was because they were always risk-takers so why not take a risk in the service of something that mattered to them. So, you know, they were very kind of gung-ho about it. But I interviewed other folks who said, "No, you know, I've always seen myself as sort of fearful, kind of conservative and cautious, and this seemed the safer route." And yet, even though they were taking a stand, you know, saying "no" to something, that a friend or a colleague or a manager was asking, they had framed it to themselves as safer to say, "No."

So one of the things that we've learned is that we first want to think about how am I most effective? When have I been the best communicator? When have I really been able to influence other people and to play to your strengths? So, if I see myself as more cautious, I'm going to frame the challenge in a way that makes the values-driven, ethical option feel safer. If I see myself as more assertive and aggressive and a risk-taker, I'm going to frame the situation in such a way that it plays to my self-image. And similarly, if I think I am most effective in writing, or most effective one-on-one, or most effective in groups, or most effective in a teaching mode, or most effective positioning myself as the learner by asking questions, I'm going to use the strategies that I am comfortable with. And we actually have examples in the book and in the curriculum of people who have used all those different kinds of strategies, depending on their own abilities, their own comfort levels in order to be able to influence a decision.

Another tip is to literally pre-script yourself. First you want to identify what is the values-based position that matters to you. You know really be clear about what you're caring about here. Often our own emotions about a particular person who's promoting an idea or a particular individual who we think is vulnerable, you know, it's not that that's good to be aware of those things, of course it is. But sometimes we're not really clear about what is the values-based position that we're concerned about here. We can't address every problem in one conversation. So you do try and get some clarity about what is the issue I'm focusing on here.

And then we ask people to think about what's at stake or at risk for everyone involved, including yourself, including the people you're trying to influence. Not because you're using that to do a kind of risk analysis or a stakeholder analysis, but rather because if you understand what they're concerned about, you might be able to frame a solution that will mitigate the risks for them and make it easier for them to actually understand and take your position.

We ask you to anticipate the reasons and rationalizations, the arguments they're going to anticipate, the objections. And then think in advance about responding and reframing them and then to literally, you know, create their script and action plan and to share it with a colleague — a trusted colleague within the organization or outside the organization, depending on what the issue is, so that you can rehearse and get more comfortable. That's the peer coaching piece of it.

One of the things that we've learned is that if you do this kind of pre-scripting and rehearsal, one of the things is you take the emotion down. One of the seven pillars of GVV is something we call normalization, and we've learned that if you think of the ethical challenges, the exception, often people try and just rush through it. And they may just do what's easier because they want to get back to work, get back to the things they're comfortable with and good at. But frankly, if you understand that this is a normal part of doing the work you do, it's going to come up every day, and take the emotion down and actually do this kind of rehearsal and practice, it can be more effective.

We also talk to people about voicing values does not mean going to someone and shaking your fist and stamping your foot and saying, "That's wrong." It usually means something much more tactical, something much more strategic. Think about the times when you've influenced folks to do anything, whether there's an ethical component to it or not. You know, sometimes what we've found is that people will simply look at the person they want to influence and think about when has he or she ever changed their mind, what triggered them to change their mind, what do they respond to? Are they more likely to hear me if I put my position in a clear written document? Are they more likely to respond in conversation? Do they resonate with analogies and with stories about examples of other people encountering these situations? Or maybe I'm not going to talk to these people myself. Maybe — who does this person I want to influence listen to, and can I get to that person? So some of those are some of the kinds of strategies we suggest.

I just want to conclude by sharing one story, if I may. One of the people I interviewed, and it's a business example, but I think you'll see analogies to your own interpersonal and organizational experiences. But the young woman, new in her organization, she had a new boss, she was working in a financial services firm, and one day her boss came to her and said, "I'm meeting with a client this afternoon about his portfolio, his investment portfolio, and it significantly underperformed. It's underperformed the benchmarks we set, so I want you to come up with an alternate benchmark to make it look like this product has performed better than it has, so that I can communicate with this client this afternoon." So it's a lot of time pressure. She didn't really know her boss, so she didn't feel comfortable — she wasn't sure how honest she could be with him, how direct, rather, she could be with him. She didn't know what to do, but she thought this was wrong, obviously, you know, lying to this client, deceiving a client.

And so she asked a colleague, you know, "Am I crazy, this doesn't seem right." And, you know, the colleague said, "Well, of course it's not right, but if you don't do it, he's just going to ask me to do it, so you know, you'll have ruined your relationship with your boss and you won't really have fixed anything." And so she wasn't really sure what to do. She knew that she didn't want to lie to the client. So that's the GVV case. It's not what should she do, you know, whether she should do all that her boss asks, but rather, how could she get the right thing done?

So what she actually ended up doing, and I wanted to share the example because I think it's instructive, is she went to her boss and she took the same argument that people will often use to say, I can't act on my values, by saying there's not enough time. But she went to her boss and said, "Well, you know, the meeting's this afternoon, you came to me this morning, I don't have enough time to come up with an alternate analysis and benchmark and a set of slides that will be convincing. But what I *can* do, and what I *did* do, is I created a set of slides and a kind of script for you to explain exactly where our allocation,

you know, our investment of your portfolio went off track and why and what we're doing going forward, next quarter, to address each of those points.”

And so, she gave him a literal set of slides and a script and, you know, he wasn't thrilled, but he said, “All right,” and he used it, and the client wasn't thrilled, but the client accepted it. But what she had recognized is that her boss was not invested in being unethical or in lying. Her boss was invested in getting through a difficult meeting with a client who happened to be a good friend of the senior partner in the firm. And so what she did is she solved his problem, she solved her boss's problem, but in a different way than the way he had asked. So she literally pre-scripted him, she gave him a set of scripts and slides and images and arguments so he would feel more comfortable going into that conversation.

And the reason I wanted to end with that example is that often we have this preemptive sense of what we think the person we're trying to deal with needs or wants, and that leads us to constrain our own choices. But if we actually try and think about what is literally at stake for the individual, in this case the boss had to get through a difficult conversation, and we try and solve that problem for them, then we can sometimes address these issues without going down the unethical path. Now some people will object and say, “Well, she never told him it was wrong.” You know, which she would say is, well, he knew, and that we weren't at a point in our relationship where I felt like it would be very constructive to say, you know, “Sir, I think you're being unethical.” But it did create an opportunity for them to solidify their relationship in a way that going forward, hopefully, they would be able to communicate more honestly, because he didn't see her as someone who was accusing him of being unethical, but rather someone who was trying to help him solve a difficult challenge.

So I'm going to stop there. I think I've run a little over, and I apologize, but if there are some questions or comments that people have I'm going to click “stop presenting,” because I think that's what I need to do, so Lisa can speak.

**Dr. Lehmann:** Mary, I thank you so much for the really insightful presentation that I think will be very important to us within the VA as we try to find ways of doing the right thing, and not just in a theoretical sense, but in the sense of actually acting on our values and in particular in the VA where our I CARE values are so front and center. I want to just turn it over to Matt Tuchow, who is the Executive Director of Compliance and Business Integrity and is a co-sponsorer of Compliance and Ethics Week with our National Center for Ethics and Health Care, to see if he has any comments or questions for Professor Gentile.

**Matt Tuchow:** Thank you, Lisa. Mary, thank you again for participating in our Compliance and Ethics Week, and one of our — as Lisa mentioned at the outset, our I CARE principles begin with Integrity. And the VHA relies on all of its employees to be custodians of its reputation. And so this is a great time for everyone in the organization to recommit to our principle of integrity.

And I wanted to talk to you about one of our themes this week, which is speaking up when you observe unethical conduct or suspect wrongdoing as one way of exhibiting integrity. And I'm wondering whether you could perhaps say a word or two more for the Compliance and Business Integrity officers, as well as the ethics officers, who are on the line listening and are thinking about how to promote “Speak up,” and

it sounds as though your GVV model provides an opportunity to do some encouragement to people for speaking up. So that's one question that I have.

And then I'll ask my second question, because I want to leave time for others as well, which is, tell me about your model in the context of fraud, waste, and abuse. We're doing a lot of thinking about what is the appropriate response to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse, and if you assume most employees are not bad apples, as you mentioned, but they may have opportunities to do something, you know, if there are pressures on them to go one way or the other – tell me how, if at all, this model can be used to encourage people to do the right thing.

**Dr. Gentile:** Well, thank you, Matt. Those are two great questions and big questions, so I'll try and give somewhat short answers, but there's a lot more I could say and I'm happy to have more conversations, after the webinar. But to begin with on your first question, which was about, you know, for the compliance officers and the ethics officers, you know, how do they think about this in the context of speak-up culture, etcetera.

So this is something I encounter a lot when I go into business settings. The language of speak-up culture has become pretty common these days, and the challenge is that sometimes people really see that as strictly a kind of internal whistle-blowing. You know, basically speaking up and reporting something that is an abuse. And, of course, there are times when that's absolutely necessary. I've worked with some organizations that are government contractors, they have mandatory reporting, and so their ethics and compliance officers get concerned when they hear about Giving Voice to Values because they feel like, well, does this mean people are just taking matters into their own hands and not reporting what needs to be reported?

But what's interesting is that we think of GVV as addressing that concern in a couple of ways. First of all, often things don't get to the level of needing to be reported, being reportable offenses from, you know, they don't go from zero to 100. You know, there can be a lot of behaviors that are not necessarily reportable offenses, but that are leading us down that path. And, so what GVV is about is trying to get people to be more comfortable raising issues, having these conversations, addressing issues before that kind of extreme situation actually occurs.

And so, what we've seen and it's interesting, one of the companies that's been using GVV the longest is Lockheed Martin, the defense contractor. They've been using it for seven or eight years now, and they have seen some interesting things in their data gathering. They've found that the impact of GVV with their employees has led to a couple of things. They've said that people are in fact raising issues more, but they're often coming to their ethics officers and saying, look, there's something going on in my group. I think it's problematic. I want to address it. But can I work with you to create an effective action plan and script and to coach, and to get comfortable with what I need to do?

And, so what they're finding is that they, you know, from Lockheed's perspective, this is really good in a couple of ways. Number one, rather than the ethics officer simply being seen as the police, and I come to you and I dump the problem in your lap and then my hands are clean, they actually become trusted colleagues, trusted coaches, trusted mentors. And they see this as more of a true culture change,

because rather than simply, you know, policing activities, people are trying to raise issues themselves before they get to that level. So, they see that as a good thing.

Secondly, it means that the ethics officers have a better relationship, are more informed about what's really going on in the organization, because people are seeing them as those kinds of trusted advisor and coaches. And then thirdly, they're seeing that when people do raise issues that are reportable offenses to the ethics officers, they're more likely to be truly, you know, mandatory reporting situations rather than false-positives, where someone just didn't know where else to complain, so they went and dumped it in your lap, you know. So, for all those reasons, we're finding that ethics officers, once they understand GVV, are finding it to be a useful companion to the work they do and actually improving their relationship with the rest of the organization because they are in fact advising and coaching folks in those ways.

Now your second question was I believe that you're trying to get folks to address issues of waste and fraud, and I guess what I would say from a GVV perspective what's most useful in that is that instead of just incentivizing people to do that, you know, with carrots and sticks and with educational outreach, which, you know, all of which is fine, but also actually giving people the opportunity to think about how to address those issues, how to talk to talk about those issues in a way that's going to make it more feasible for them.

So, I'll draw an analogy from my work in an educational setting, but I'll think you'll be able to draw the comparison. You know, cheating has become a huge problem in academic institutions globally, but certainly across the United States and it's usually, depending in the kind of institution you're in, there's punishments and there's student honor codes and mandatory — you know, you're supposed to report anything you see. Nevertheless, it's very difficult for a student, a peer, a friend to report.

And, so what some faculty, some educators have done with GVV around this issue to engage students in a GVV exercise around cheating, where they give them scenarios and ask them, you know, here's a friend asking you to cheat or, you know, whatever the situation is, work together to create an action plan and a script, something you might do and say to address that issue. And then rehearse it and then share it with your colleagues and then peer coach to make it better.

And what's interesting about it is that, you know, people don't feel cool reporting on their friends, you know, or even their colleagues. And, so what this does is, it starts to give people cover. You are assigned the task of figuring out how might you raise and say something about this issue in a way that you might get comfortable with. And you're assigned to generate that with the very peers that, you know, you might eventually be feeling like, they wouldn't think I was cool if I was raised it. And, so what happens is that people — it's post-decision-making again. I'm not asking you *whether* you would do this. I'm asking you *what if* you were going to do this, what would you say and do, and how could you do it in a way that it's most likely to be something you could get out of your mouth and something you could say that would show that you still respected your colleague and that you weren't necessarily just telling them they were jerks, you know. So, the students got into this situation where they were creating lots of innovative ways to raise the issue and rehearsing it with each other, and it became more speakable.

So, I think it's great that you're trying to address those issues, but I think it's useful to help people know it's not just about knowing when there is waste and fraud, but actually helping them think about, well, how can I raise it in way that's going to feel comfortable for me, and what might I say, and can I practice that, and can I give you some context to make it safer for you to do that?

**Dr. Lehmann:** Thank you very much. I have one other question for you, Professor Gentile, from my colleague Dr. Ashby Sharpe, who asks about whether or not you can speak to how you see the role and scope of the ethicist in providing advice in complex institutional settings, particularly in the context of the distinction that you made between focusing on how you would get something done versus what one should or would do, where the ethicist is typically more focused on the latter question, whereas you're focused more on not the analysis, but the actual practical question of how you would do something.

**Dr. Gentile:** Right. And, so I'm really glad that question came up because I hope I said this, but it's something I want to emphasize. This approach, this action approach, Giving Voice to Values, is not meant to replace the awareness and the analysis, which is more of the traditional ethicist role about how do we analyze the situation, recognize the situation, and determine when it's appropriate. Those are hugely important questions, especially in the profession where you all are working. But the fact is that we often stop short there, and so I see GVV as working in tandem with the role that the traditional medical ethicist has.

In fact, I'm working with some health care ethicists to develop that approach right now. Because what we want to do is to be able to do two things: to help people not only understand, but then act, but also to understand the point I made earlier, that sometimes we unconsciously understand an issue as more complicated or more gray than it may actually be, simply because we don't believe we have an action option. And so, from my perspective, being able to master some of these GVV ability skills and questions means that you can have more of a true impact with the awareness and analysis conversation, as well.

**Dr. Lehmann:** Thank you so much, Professor Gentile. We really appreciate your taking the time to share your very insightful perspective on this complicated issue with us at the VA, and we're sure that this is going to be helpful to us as we struggle with how to really act on our values in this complex organizational system.

**Dr. Gentile:** Thank you very much, and please feel free, anyone who wants to be in touch, to talk further.