

Be You In Focus Webinar Transcript

Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions for Wellbeing

Presented by Amelia Joyce, Kathryn Hopps, Karina Humphrey and Kyle Ratcliffe on 5 May 2021

Amelia Joyce:

Hi, everyone, and welcome to today's In Focus webinar, Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions for wellbeing. Shortly, we'll be joined by three panel members, who are also working with the Be You initiative, like myself, and their names are Karin Humphrey, Kathryn Hopps, and Kyle Ratcliffe. After the session as well today, we will be hanging around for a little bit longer to answer any questions that you might have that have popped up during your thoughts and your reflections of this webinar. So before we get any further into looking at ethical dilemmas and decisions for wellbeing, I'd like to welcome Kathryn Hopps to our screen to do an acknowledgement of country.

Kathryn Hopps:

Thanks Amelia.

I'd like to say Yhunn and hello from Ngunna Dhaara, Ngunnawal people's land and I'd like to acknowledge that I learnt this greeting from Richie Allan, Ngunnawal lore keeper, and also an emerging elder. And I'd like to pay my respects to the current Ngunnawal elders Ngunnawal ancestors, the elders who've passed, and the children and young people who'll be elders in the future. And I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the many lands from which we're joining from today, and invite you to acknowledge the land that you are on in your own way. And you might like to do that in our chat box.

Amelia Joyce:

I'm on Kurna land and so is Karin.

Kathryn Hopps:

That's lovely.

Thank you. So, throughout today's webinar, I'd also like to encourage you to consider the many ways that we can support wellbeing informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. This might include the importance of connection to the land, the people, the animals, the waterways, it might be connecting with elders, and, also how we can build a sense of cultural safety, and a feeling of being proud of who we are, and where we come from, in everyday practice. I'd love to see all the lands that people are on if you feel OK to share that in the chat box with us today. Thanks, Amelia.

Amelia Joyce:

Thanks a lot Kathryn. At Be You, we're very committed to incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing and perspectives into everything that we do with Be You. And I would like to welcome Karin, to the screen, as well, to come along and talk to us a little bit more about what Be You is.

Hi Karin.

Karin Humphrey:

Hi, Amelia, hi Kathryn, how are you both?

Good to see you.

Yeah, I'd like to say, I'd like to say Naa Marni from Kurna Country, which Amelia and I are both meeting you from today. In fact, Amelia is in the office right next door to me, which is very interesting. OK, so a little bit about Be You. Be You is a national initiative that is funded by the federal government. Be You is led by Beyond Blue and it's in partnership with Early Childhood Australia who supports early learning services and school aged care, and headspace that supports the primary and secondary schools space. Our vision is that every learning community is positive, inclusive, and resilient, and a place where every child, young person, educator, and family can achieve their best possible mental health.

So, being a part of Be You means your early learning service or school, has access to Be You consultants, such as Kathryn and myself, to assist you in with you either taking your learning's and plan of action.

Be You embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogy, , the ways of being, knowing and doing to focus on and make mental health matter. So, on your screen, you can see, two of our Always Be You symbols. And Amelia is going to talk to you about those now.

Thanks Amelia.

Amelia Joyce:

Thanks, Karin.

And, I guess, those symbols, you can see up on the screen. They are very important to us as a Be You initiative. And particularly, because we are all gathering here today, consider, learn and reflect about early childhood wellbeing and education.

So, and especially today, we're doing, within this context, we're actually considering how decision making influences and is influenced by our wellbeing. So, self-care is really important for us to be considering.

I would also like to acknowledge that over the last 18 months, most of us have actually found ourselves needing to increasingly make many rapid, high stakes decisions that we didn't anticipate and that doing this is hard. So, I do really want to extend thoughts of thanks and well-being to everyone who is participating with us today and acknowledge that sometimes unexpected feelings and thoughts could emerge as a result of our conversations. And sometimes it can be challenging, to consider what the next steps are. So, please be aware today of any thoughts and feelings that come up for you, and consider a plan for how you will support yourself in that space.

Reach out to who you can call to for support. And that might be one of my support people, actually giving me a call to see how I was going. So I have a plan for what you do in that space.

So, the other thing that we will be providing during this webinar, are some links and phone numbers to professional support that will be posted in the chat.

And, again, also, consider your personal networks and self-care strategies that can support you as well.

We are creating, having, and feeling a sense of safety. It's really important in these spaces, as we learn and reflect together. So part of that is also, we really want to create those spaces, where people can be safe to be who they are. They're able to work from their strengths, and express their opinions, and beliefs and feel heard in those spaces, even when the views are opposing, and we're talking about ethical dilemmas and ethical decision making today. And, I'm sure, all of our panellists, we're not going to agree all the time. So, we'll be practicing that ourselves, as well.

So, please consider, also, confidentiality and privacy in those spaces to, in terms of that, any questions that you have in relation to anything that we pop up today, please pop them in, and we will endeavour to respond to them in some way. Or support you in reaching out to someone who can provide those answers.

And, ultimately, please remember to take care of yourself as we talk about mental health today. Another way to make this space safe is about learning how to operate the space. I'm going to welcome Kyle to the screen to talk about a few more tech tips that we can look at today. Hi, Kyle.

Kyle Ratcliffe:

Hello from beautiful Darwin land, I'd like to acknowledge the Larrakia nation, on which land I meet.

I'm sure, given circumstances in the last 12 months, we're all pretty familiar with using IT and webinar functions, but I'll just quickly run through a few things.

So, throughout the webinar, you can ask questions about using the webinar function support available, the control panel with the question box is highlighted in blue, the responses in green are public responses, and the ones in red are private responses. You can also use your control panel to manage your phone on computer audio.

So, today, everyone is being placed in listen only mode.

If you are experiencing any other difficulties at any time, please note the customer care details on the screen, and contact this team directly. You can ask questions via the question box, and we hope to respond to as many of your queries as possible. during today's session. I'd like to acknowledge the people working in the background, which is Dino, Nathan, Maria, Tahlia, and Alicia are helping us out today. Any links to resources, or references we use in this content will be posted in the chat, but, they'll also be available in the handout you can download along with some reflective questions. This will be available, post webinar. We also invite you to participate in the polls, which'll be launching throughout the session, and we're also making the attendee list public now. All event participants will be able to access a certificate of participation and the recording of this webinar afterwards.

Amelia Joyce:

All right, thanks Kyle, and you mentioned polls. So I think probably, it's a good time to practice a poll now.

So we'll pop a poll up on the screen, and I'd like everyone to consider why you're attending today. So, any one of those options, if there's something else, another reason that's drawn you there, please pop that in the chat, too, if you'd like to share.

Why are you attending today, everyone in the background?

Anyone? Kyle? Kathryn?

Karin Humphrey:

Oh you're talking to us?

Amelia Joyce:

Yes, anyone.

Karin Humphrey:

I'm attending, because I'm really keen to share my thoughts around ethical dilemmas and decision making, and also probably what I've learned in my preparation for this, and how maybe my thinking has changed a little bit.

Amelia Joyce:

Brilliant. Yeah, so that's true, isn't it? It's been a process in even considering how we had to really put it, how we make our decisions under the microscope.

Really put them out there, so let's close the poll down and let's see where everyone else has gone in terms of that.

OK, Kathryn, what are your first thoughts when you see those results?

Kathryn Hopps:

It's fairly spread, isn't it? about why people have come.

The first one probably resonates most for me. The exploring what influences my decision making, we don't actually have much of an opportunity to talk about this is kind of thing, making it visible thing, so, yeah, I particularly relate to that first one, but it's really interesting. It's quite a spread in the reasons why people have come today.

Amelia Joyce:

And the good news is that, is that all of those things we will be touching on it to some extent, throughout today's focus and what we'll be doing, because we will be unpacking decision making and its relationship with wellbeing, particularly when we are faced with those ethical dilemmas.

So, to do that, we'll consider what influences decision making, and, ultimately how we arrive at the decisions we also consider how we know that our decision is right. And there's something, I think, Kyle you might talk a little bit about it, something called hindsight, that we'll put under the microscope a little bit, as well, and we'll also discuss ways that we can articulate the reasons why we make the decisions. And there's a framework that we can help support ourselves to, to actually learn the skill of articulating those things.

As well as the skill of being OK with the decisions that we make. So the next slide, we're talking about decisions.

We all make lots of decisions, like, even before the webinar today, we were having decisions about where to place Kyle's banner in the background, and, you know that's a decision.

This just up here on this slide, the panellists and the people in the background, we've all got together and had to think about all the decisions that get made in the days of early childhood educators, leaders, and ourselves in those spaces, and some of them are big, some of them are small. Some of them simple, and some of them are quite complex as well.

So it's understandable that when we actually put out there how many decisions that we're making, that sometimes it can feel like we're doing nothing but making decisions all day.

So, have a think about where that sits with you, whether or not you're surprised by some of the things that are there, or whether it resonates with you as well and, and we will be talking a little bit about those complex spaces.

Anne Kennedy refers to tricky decisions or difficult decisions are those that involve messy complexity, so we will be unpacking that a little bit more throughout the day too.

So it's time for another poll.

And that is the second poll, is.

Is up, yes, it is up.

This is about thinking about the last time you made an important decision in service or school and why did you make that choice?

Kyle, when you think about decisions that you make within the context of working with young children in the early learning service space or school space, what do you think, does anything pop to your mind as a first response?

Kyle Ratcliffe:

I'd say I'd probably lean towards the rules and regulations and regulatory requirements, but I try to consider all of them.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah. Yep. So hopefully we'll have some, everyone will have some strategies for how we can make sure we cover off all those biases. So let's see what the quick poll results were.

And it's great to see all of the above because each of those spaces, they are equally important in lots of ways.

And sometimes the consequences, for not covering some aspects of these foundational spaces can be larger than others, but it is important to consider all of those things. So, let's move straight into some questions for our panellists.

And this first question, I'm actually going to give to you, Kathryn. So up on the screen, we can see all the things that go on in terms of what influences our decisions. And we'll be covering many of these, I think, throughout the responses that you, Karin and Kyle, will be giving today.

But, Kathryn, what do you want to focus on when we're considering what influences our decision making?

Kathryn Hopps:

Well, for me, Amelia, something that really drives my decision making is actually my understanding about ethics and the process of ethical decision making. And I'm particularly guided by Linda Newman and Lois Pollnitz's ethical response cycle, and in that cycle, one of the things that is considered an ethical position that we have on the slide there. But actually, the first starting point, in that response cycle is considering the various legal and regulatory aspects. And in education and care services. This is, fundamentally, we must do this. And it will often determine, the response, or the decision, at least, in part, if not, in full. And at that starting point, we might also consider the guiding documents, such as our service policies, but also professional codes. So the ECA Code of Ethics, as well, and some of some of the legal and regulatory things, they're not negotiable. So we, we must really follow those. But with the ethical positions and theories, there's also, when we're thinking about rules and regulations, we might also be influenced by a moral obligation in relation to rules. So that's called the rule-based ethical position, and it's the belief that we must always follow the rules in making decisions without any exception.

For example, in determining what might be best to do, if we believe we have a moral obligation to follow rules, we won't make any exceptions based on an individual child's circumstances or family circumstances.

We might not consider cultural considerations or a community context like a pandemic or a natural disaster. So, for example, you might always apply the late fee for late pickup or late payment of fees without considering an individual family's circumstances. But there are other ethical positions.

Amelia Joyce:

And some rules are more breakable than others, aren't they?

Kathryn Hopps:

That's right, if you think about service policies, whilst they are really important guiding documents and keep educators safe.

They're the ones that we can probably think about with these other ethical positions as well.

Amelia. So there's also care based ethics. And that's a significant influence in education and care settings, and that's where we take into the account the impact of a decision on a relationship.

In my background, I've worked in a lot of small rural and regional communities, and something that's impacted my decision-making is the ongoing relationship with that child or family, not only in the professional setting, but also out in the community as well.

And there's a couple of other ethical positions, as well. So we were influenced by our virtues and values. So, for me, the value of children's rights and valuing what's in a child's best interest, and also valuing reconciliation, those values impact on my decisions as well, particularly tricky decision making.

And there's actually a fourth major one that's happening there and is influencing our decisions. And that's around, it's about the greatest good for the greatest amount of people.

And we've seen that a lot in the last 12 months. A lot of decisions being made in relation in the context of the pandemic are actually about designed to protect the health of a whole population. But we've also seen that ethical position being drawn on by leaders too, particularly in being flexible with some of the arrangements, for example, drop-off and collection of children. So, we've seen services being flexible around keeping families, adults out of the service, particularly where, for example, there's a young child who needs to be settled into care, and that decision (to let them come in), has more benefit than harm for everyone. So there's lots of ethical positions that are influencing my decision making, and I'm sure you can relate to some of those as well.

Amelia Joyce:

Definitely, and we all have those default ethical spaces where we start as well, so, it's interesting to consider where our defaults are and how we work our way through, considering all those aspects. Karin, do you want to add anything?

Perhaps a little story?

Karin Humphrey:

Thanks, Amelia. Yes, I'd like to- thanks so much, Kathryn- I think in this whole process, learning some of the theory behind it and some of those ethical positions and what influences our decisions has really helped me.

I think I've gained valuable knowledge as a professional, yet again, which is great. So, I'm going to give you a little example of when I had to make a decision, and what eventuated from that. So, I was a new director of a rural and remote communities. So, Kathryn and I have some similar backgrounds, a rural and remote community here in South Australia, and it was my first Directorship, so it is the first time I've been a Director. So, as you can imagine, I was very bound by the rules and regulations, and all of the things that I thought I needed to follow all of the time. So, we had a new child start at our centre, and the family but from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

We'd done all of the orientation process, all of the enrolment forms, with all of the information that we thought we needed had been gathered.

Not long after the child started the educators in the room, he then approached me to say that they had some concerns around what happened with him at mealtimes. So the family's expectations were very different compared to how what our processes and procedures were like within the centre.

So initially, the decision that we had made without much consultation was around our rules.

So our rules were that we would support children to develop their self-care skills, which included self-feeding.

So this child was spoon-fed at home and not encouraged to self-feed. So our rules-based, ethical position had been followed, because it was really important to follow the rules.

That's what I thought, right?

So what we hadn't taken into consideration was those individual circumstances, including the cultural considerations of this family, what eventuated from this decision was a child that became very distressed at mealtimes. He knew what was going to be expected of him. It didn't sit right with what he'd learned and what his life was like.

So that was something that distressed all of us. So after observing this, I made a time to have a conversation with the family about their mealtime routine and the why of this mealtime routine, like, why do you do it this way? So then I had all of the information. So that was really important for me. So together we were able to work out a solution that supported the child's sense of belonging and wellbeing in our centre.

And so what happened, we stopped the rule based decision making process, and we looked at a care based ethical position.

So we took into account the impact of a decision on a relationship and our relationship with that child and with that family, and I'll go back to what Kathryn said. When you're in a rural and remote community, it's not just the relationship in the centre. You see these people, outside of the centre, all of the time, the town I was in was quite small.

So when I revisited our policy, I've looked at it quite closely and with a real eye for detail, and I noticed the word was 'encourage' the development of self-care skills. So it wasn't a rule, it was a guideline, so that was really important for me.

So I guess I wanted to end with, you're not always going to understand or agree with some of the decisions that are made regarding children and child rearing practices, but it's useful to reflect on your own values and judgements during this time.

So that's the virtues and values ethical position that Kathryn was talking about, and consider how these may or may not be helpful in communicating with families, thank you.

Amelia Joyce:

Thanks Karin, and you've really highlighted how entrenched some of our unthinking actions, those things that we actually just do, because we've always done them, or we consider that they're the way things need to be done. And even just our unconscious bias like. Oh, this is a really tricky word, because it sounds a little bit nasty, but it's not, it's actually understanding our perspective and our viewpoint of where we come from, where we consider that notion of unconscious bias.

Because we're socialised into ways of living, and ways of knowing, and ways of doing that, until we actually put that under the microscope and become aware of those things, we don't even know that we're doing a lot of those things, as well. And it kind of leads in to what you've unpacked in terms of policies and things. It's making me think about policy, statements of philosophies, all those sort of things that happen in early childhood services. Kyle, do you have anything that you want to add in relation to that?

Kyle Ratcliffe:

Yeah, absolutely. I was just reflecting on what Karin had said around, reflecting on your own judgement and values. And I think it's important to remember that things like is service, philosophy, and purpose are a working document. You can reflect on those and, and adapt those to suit the service, so if they're not suiting your service's needs, then change them.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah! Change them, look at them regularly.

Involve community, co-design, those sort of things. I think it's time for another poll, panellists. So, when we pop this poll up, we want people to consider when making decisions within the context of messy complexity.

So, when you've got competing values, when you've got competing ethical foundations at hand, what, how do you feel about it?

Are you confident?

Are you working towards establishing some more processes?

Just wanted to see where you're at as an audience, in terms of those spaces, because sometimes, it can feel like all the decisions, rest on our shoulders, as individuals, and we can't feel isolated in, in those spaces.

In terms of how accountable we are, in the area. So, there are some things that we can do to support ourselves, and to seek support for when those tricky decisions or play, big you've places to go to for more information about. Supporting, making tricky decisions, could be through, as a participating learning community, have a consultant available via check ins. We've actually got a leadership forum that unpacks some ethical decision making, as well that was hosted, and we've got an upcoming leadership forum about authentic leadership as well, that people might like to join to extend on some of these concepts that we're talking about today.

So, let's see what the answers are. Which panellist would like to make a comment?

Is there anyone with a burning desire to say something?

Kathryn Hopps:

Amelia its Kathryn here, I was just going to say, I think this very much depends on where you're at in relation to your experience in your career, like, now where I am, I feel more confident in having a process and how to make decisions and also a really good knowledge of authoritative sources of information. And

it's kind of like a support mechanism, I know where to go if I need information about something to make a decision. So, yeah, I think this is, I just want to acknowledge, I think it's very influenced, by where we're at in our own experience and knowledge around decision making.

Amelia Joyce:

Yes and where we're at in terms of the other aspects of life. That's going on for us as well, which will lead us to our next question shortly, but first of all, I just want to, let's pop the next slide back up.

Just look at, you touched on these before, Kathryn, these common ethical positions that are those founding spaces. So, that would be good for people to take a moment. And consider.

What, potentially, the default ethical position is, I think, for mine, my default position sits in that virtues and values, and moral space, and shifts into the caring and minimizing harm area quite regularly. And I think some of that is because of my background in social work, as well as education.

And that's not to say that the laws and regulations very much need to play a part in the work that I do and have done in the past, as well as the consequences.

So, it's good to see where your starting point is to see, and make sure you mark off, considering all those ethical positions.

How about, how about you, Kyle? You talked a little bit about, starting, potentially, about the laws and regulations. Still sitting there?

Kyle Ratcliffe:

Absolutely. Yeah, I definitely still always have those rules and obligations and laws in my mind, whenever I'm trying to make a decision.

Something else that I, that really drives my decisions, or decision making process, is my past experiences, or in some cases, lack thereof. You know, if I've made a decision in the past that didn't work, I'm probably not going to make that same decision again. I think sometimes something that's overlooked is stress levels. It can often be a big driver. When we are overly- stressed, we tend to make poor choices. So from a practicing self-awareness, can help understand what I'm feeling. And sometimes, I might need to just acknowledge that, and take a step back, pause, consider how I'm feeling, and how this might impact my decision.

The self-regulation mentioned in the Be You Planning for Well-Being, Mine, Yours, and Ours, handout, helps us consider self-regulation and stress across five inter-related domains, such as biological, emotional, cognitive, social, and prosocial.

So, basically, biological stressors include health and environmental factors such as noise, emotional stressors or experiences that triggers strong, positive, or negative emotions, cognitive stressors related to processing certain kinds, or amounts of information, and exposure to experiences requiring more complex thinking.

Social stressors include noticing, identifying, and responding to social cues, and understanding the effect of our behaviour on others.

And prosocial stressors include coping with other people's stress behaviours or expectations.

So, by taking the time to acknowledge these stressors and to try and reduce or remove them, we can put ourselves in a better position to make a more informed and better decision.

Amelia Joyce:

I like what you say about reducing as well as, because sometimes we can't remove stressors that we're experiencing, but we can potentially reduce the impact of them. The next slide, might unpack a little bit of this as well.

That's one way to reduce stress, where you can see on the image, you know, working and talking through things as a team, as much as possible in that reflective practice space. Is there anything else you want to add around self-awareness, or self-regulation, or should we

Cross to Kathryn to maybe give us some tips about how to actually apply and practice the self-regulation, self-awareness aspects?

Kathryn Hopps:

Thanks, Amelia. If you're aware that at the time, you feel like you need to make a decision, but there's, it's not the right time or place, because there are some stressors going on for you - there's something really practical that I've learnt more recently, that can help to do this. I really strive to be an ethical practitioner and process is called Stop, Reflect, Act. And it's very helpful. So, just knowing, if it's not the right time and place. If for example, if you're supervising children and family comes and asks you quite a tricky question, that, you know, it's just not appropriate to answer on the spot. Just knowing that you can stop. The first step is knowing you can actually stop. You don't have to respond straightaway. You can acknowledge to the family it's a really important question, but I'd actually like some time to consider it, can we make an appointment to talk later? And then the next two parts of the process are Reflecting and Acting. So, when we reflect, we might do that individually. But just like the photo shows on the slide there, it can be really helpful to talk it over with other people.

It might be a mentor, might be a trusted colleague, and that reflecting might be going back again and considering all the legal or regulatory obligations. And, these ethical positions and all the things that are going on at this point, is where, I would be feeling a bit of a tension between those ethical positions because I'm very passionate about protective relationships for children. And to maintain positive relationships with families, and children, as a protective factor for mental health. So, that's kind of what's happened for me at the reflect.

And then the next bit is, Act, so when you've had that time, to really consider, especially, when it is an ethical dilemma, you can then formulate a response.

But, also, no, that's not the end of it. Perhaps you've made that decision, you can actually come together with your colleagues or spend some time individually, reflecting again later on when we do have that bit of information we didn't have before, which is the hindsight, which we'll talk a bit about later, we didn't have that. We've now got it, let's reflect again together and perhaps we'd make a different decision next time. Stop, Reflect, Act, Amelia is something that I think is really helpful in the moment to know that you can stop with some particular decisions, ask for the time that you need to reflect before you act and make that decision.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah. Thanks, Kathryn.

I must admit, as far as Be You models, and tips and tools go, Stop, Reflect, Act is one of my favourite models as well. And as you were talking, I was going, yes, yes. That's so, so true that it could really provide that framework for the taking the next step, as you're talking. I was also considering how the Stop, Reflect, Act can actually be something that's done in a really short moment. Like, it could be just be to stop.

A quick pause to, take a breath, have a quick reflect, now - it's not the right time.

How can I make sure this is safe and the act could just be the very next step to set up. You don't need to make that solution as well, and that's all in the planning for wellbeing. What were you going to say?

Kathryn Hopps:

I think this is very empowering to know that you can stop, take a breath.

And acknowledging that, sometimes there are decisions we have to make on the spot, but like you're saying, just take a moment for yourself to breathe in and collect yourself and reduce some of the stressors, perhaps step away from your supervision responsibilities, if you can. Yeah. And yes, the Planning for Wellbeing tool is really great in terms of talking a bit more about, Stop, Reflect, Act, that can be really useful in different circumstances.

Amelia Joyce:

Karin, is there anything you'd like to add? We could actually have a whole webinar about self-awareness, self-regulation, and Stop, Reflect, Act. So I'm sure you've got something to say too.

Karin Humphrey:

Of course, Amelia, I always have something I'd like to say. Isn't that true? I have noticed in the chat that someone has put in there that being busy, they used to not make an ethical decision on the spot, but always ask for time to think about all of the factors involved, and I love the fact that that person has had asked for time. So I think our communication is key, look, I'm not able, I'm not in a place or a space to make that decision right now. So if you could just allow me some time to Stop, to Reflect before I Act, that would be great.

And I've also really enjoyed hearing how the other panellists, what their ethical positions are around decision making, because we are all very different. So I'll, I'll admit that my decision making always used to be based on the rules and the regulations and the legal requirements. And that I think early on in our careers, this tends to be the default setting. It definitely was my default setting because that's what you can trust, and that's what you know. But I think now, I'm more likely to take into account the impact of a decision on a relationship. So it's more the care by side of it for me. But what I've learnt just in preparing for this, is my unconscious biases, when it comes to relationships, like, if I'm making a decision that impacts on a couple of people. What are my relationships with those people? Do I care about one relationship more than I do the other? So is my decision going to be impacted by that?

So, yeah, there's some of the things that I've been considering, and I'm reflecting on all the time, that yes, it's that really.

Amelia Joyce:

I was thinking, I recently did some reading around the notion of moral injury. And when you are placed in those positions, of making difficult decisions, and how our relationships with people do impact as well, so thanks for highlighting that.

And given that great example of unconscious bias, as well. We've got another question for you, panellists.

So we'll just move to the next side, and I'd like you to consider, how do you know when you've made a right decision or the best decision?

So, Karin, you're on the hot seat.

How do you know?

Karin Humphrey:

I don't know if I always ever know. I think sometimes we just don't know. I'm hoping that I've made the best decision at the time, and the place. I guess that's what I want to highlight. I think what's important is to reflect on the fact, that at the time you made the best decision, you could say, you have to take into consideration your own state of wellbeing, which I know over the past year or so, we haven't been that good at, we tend to worry about everybody else and we don't have self-care, it hasn't been at the forefront of our minds.

And so, you also have to take into consideration the information that you had at the time, your experience and your knowledge, because they're really important because, you know, we all, and I know Kyle is going to highlight this a little bit further along the track, but we all know hindsight is a wonderful thing. And don't we wish we had had hindsight before we'd made that decision?

So, we can all acknowledge that 2020 was a massive year for decisions, and some of the decisions that we've had to make have been very traumatic. So for leaders, and for educators, and for families, so regardless of how strong and resilient you are, your ability to make the best choices can eventually run out due to something that we call decision fatigue. Decision fatigue is that feeling when you're overly stressed by the endless amount of decisions you've had to make, and we can end up making risky decisions, or avoid making decisions altogether. So when we have decision fatigue, and I'm hoping if this resonates with everyone, because it's definitely resonated with me, we can end up procrastinating. So we're putting those decisions off. Like, I'll think about that a little bit later. We can be impulsive. You just make a decision to get

it over with, we can avoid that decision altogether. So we're just unable to deal with it at the moment. Or we can be indecisive. So we just don't know what to do. And it becomes really hard to make a decision.

So in light of that, I think it's really important for everyone to consider what your framework is for making decisions. And what processes do you follow? And having something that's a little bit structured for you as an individual, I think, is quite important in this process. And then, of course, thinking about the ethical positions you consider in this and why you consider them.

So, if you've got your own decision making process, your resilience will be supported, and you'll have more of an opportunity to focus on your own wellbeing.

So it's important to recognise and acknowledge the place and space you're in when making decisions.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah, definitely, and you've really touched on the whole notion that sometimes we can't always make the best decision. Sometimes, we have to make the least worst decision as well.

And, that notion of self-awareness, as you're talking, really highlighted for me, that, if we do notice that we're doing, things like, procrastinating or making quick decisions, those sort of things. maybe there's some indicators or warning signals that we might not be making the right decision as well.

And, how we do, using that framework, using a framework of any sort to make those decisions, that covers those ethical positions that we have, can actually be a really empowering way to keep safe. And feel like there is some control in, perhaps, spaces where we don't feel like there's much control at all.

Kyle is there anything you'd like to add in terms of knowing when we have made the right decision?

Kyle Ratcliffe:

Yeah. Absolutely.

As Karin said, we really can't know what decisions are good ones until we reflect on them. And often, when we do reflect, we realise that they probably weren't the best decision.

But, you know, they were the best decisions at that time. So it's really important to have a decision making process that's inclusive of any policies, procedures, regulations, and laws, so that you can, hopefully look back and say, you know, it was the best decision at that time.

I think it's really important to have someone or a group of someones with whom you can reflect on these decisions with a critical friend who will give you honest, constructive, positive feedback, Rather than someone who might just agree with you, or, you know, tell you that you're doing an amazing job.

Also, taking time to consider their default ethical foundations. So, you know, if you're all about laws and rules and regulations, and they're all about relationships and support, they may not agree with the decision you've made, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the feedback they provide isn't valuable. And sometimes that can be more valuable, because it gives you a different perspective. Have a think about those relationships that you've got, whether they're personal, professional, or a mix of both, and then consider how they help you reflect critically on those decisions.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah, Yeah.

And having those critical friends, it is a good way to sort of sound check, and either in the in the midst, in your process of your Stop, Reflect, Act, or also as a hindsight post-reflection aspect that you could be doing in those spaces.

The other aspect around that you picked up on, it helps us grow those skills when we are having professional conversations about them, and using those frameworks as well.

There was something that you touched on, as well, Kyle, and Kathryn, you might want to expand on it a little bit more, but it is really about keeping yourself safe in those spaces and what you can do to look after yourself, and the critical friend was one option.

Is there anything you'd like to add, in terms of that, Kathryn?

Kathryn Hopps:

Yeah. Absolutely.

So, I think it is a really important time when you're doing that reflection, to listen to your feelings, because, as you said earlier, what are they trying to tell you? So, rather than pushing them away, give them a bit of space, and, using them professionally to reflect on the outcome, and that could very well lead to, it's a self-care thing, because you're giving your emotions some time, but also this can lead to really positive growth in decision making.

And this is also a time to be kind to yourself, and I'm not talking about bubble baths or pedicures, I'm talking about what, what it is that you say to yourself about that decision that you've made in the past.

And like Karin said, you know, that self-compassion, saying to yourself, 'I made the best decision at the time with the information available, in the context of my experience and knowledge'. But also recognising there's a decision that's persistently worrying you, that might be a time to reach out to your support networks to have a conversation with someone. Because that is the nature of leadership in education settings, this is going to happen a lot and we need to develop support networks and coping and decision making skills. So yeah, being kind to yourself about past decisions is really important.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah, and, and I'm not sure if any of our participants attended our virtual conference, that we held a little while ago, but I believe the recordings might be available.

And there is a fantastic presentation by some of our other Be You consultant colleagues, who actually talked about compassion in that space and it gave us some really practical strategies that I'm still learning actually, myself, to do. One of them was about taking a selfie of yourself and talking nicely. Just that notion of when you're talking about what we, you know, what we say to myself in those spaces, and sometimes that can be influenced by our default settings as well, in terms of those.

So having a go at talking to yourself as you would talk to other people when you're being supportive is, is a really good idea. Is there anything else, any of you would like to add?

Kathryn Hopps:

I was just going to say, Amelia, it might be helpful to consider how you would talk to children about your decision making. And that's your opportunity to model that positive self-talk, rather than the negative. We might say to ourselves, 'how could I have been so silly?' But if you have an opportunity to talk about a decision with children, what would you say to children about that decision? So that's another way of thinking about what you're saying to yourself, being kind to yourself as you would talk to other people. If someone was coming to talk to you about decision. What would you say?

Amelia Joyce:

I'm going to put the panellists on a bit of a spot, and going off script, I did warn them that.

I might go off script because, and I think we've got a bit of time to do this, so I will,

I want you, if you can, I'm sure you can. Kathryn, you're talking about children, how do we support children to understand the ethical decision making processes? When's the right time to start, and what do you do? Any thoughts on that?

Kathryn Hopps:

Just, I just think talking out loud about what's happening and talking, you know, putting some language to what you're deciding, and then you say things like, you know, 'when I was making this decision about what we were going to do', when, perhaps there's a relationship difficulty between a couple of children. I think

that putting language to the experience, helps children understand your thinking, and also that, what you say to yourself after making a decision as well, and I think it's important in early childhood.

So, just like with everything else, these kind of things are important to put some words to, to make explicit, to make visible for young children.

Amelia Joyce:

As we said before, it's a skill to learn to be OK with your decisions, as well, isn't it? So it's an important part of self-regulation, self-awareness. Karin? Kyle? Do you want to add anything to my random question that I just popped in there?

Kyle Ratcliffe:

I'll jump in Karin, if you don't mind. I was just going to quickly jump in and say, you know, I think the modelling, and that side of things as Kathryn touched on, is really important.

And I think something that's often overlooked in, particularly an educational setting is that reflection on actions. And I think that's something that should really be on the forefront for this, for this sort of area.

Because it's really important for kids to understand that it's, you know, it's valuable to look back and reflect on their decisions and to potentially realise that they've made the wrong decision and learn coping mechanisms and strategies for those.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah. Definitely. How about you, Karin?

Karin Humphrey:

I just want to extend on what Kyle said, so it's probably good that he jumped in before me, and it's not just reflecting on actions, but it's actually reflecting on feelings, like acknowledging feelings. I think that's very, very important when we're working in the early childhood space.

Rather than saying to a child, you know, you seem sad or you look sad, you know, how are you feeling? What's going on? You know, what's happened and, and getting the child to, to start to be able to articulate that and, that is a learned skill, it's not something that happens, you know, instinctively so we support children around acknowledging feelings when decisions are made as well, and we can do that by saying the same thing. You know, 'I've made this decision, and I actually feel a little bit grumpy about that or I feel quite sad about that' and explain why, so I would go that little step further as well.

Kathryn Hopps:

Trying to be that support person, then you ask the person what do you need right now? You know, it could be a hug, could be to sit together. And you've then got that opportunity to show, you know, I'm here for you and even though you're feeling bad about what happened. Yeah, to reach out, and might be to co-regulate or just to be together, or just to talk about it. You've got that opportunity to model how you can support someone after they've made a decision that they're not feeling quite so good about.

Amelia Joyce:

I was thinking about conversations about, oh, it sounds like you've made that decision based on your understanding of the rules, or you've made that decision, because you're really caring about, or you're carrying about the person that you're related to or you're making that decision.

Because you think it's important to do that to be, for the right thing, or to be a good person, or those sort of things.

I think what you've touched on, it's really growing that, that opportunity to develop, you know that cognition, that thinking, that is so valuable. And also, to help children get some awareness. Like, OK, I even think about how often do young children, when they are more verbal, they talk about fairness. So it's actually a prime space to be talking about ethical decision making in ways that are applicable and can be concrete for them, too.

So, we, we've kind of done a mini webinar within, within a webinar there. So, just around supporting children's ethical decision making as well, So, we are in the process of winding up now.

Heading to the chat space, but I just wanted to ask, each of our panellists, are there any takeaways, must haves, don't forget this? If you forget everything else that we talked about today, don't forget this? Types of messages you'd like to share with people.

Karin Humphrey:

I have, if it's OK for me to start? And that's about being aware of where you're sitting at that time. So what place and space are you in? And I think we've all highlighted throughout the webinar is that, you know, how you are feeling right now.

Can you make this decision right now? Do you need support to make that decision? So think about that before and Stop, Reflect, Act, I'm probably jumping in on what Kathryn may have finished with. So I'm apologising in advance if I have. So, take that time. I think that's really important.

Amelia Joyce:

So take the time and self-awareness.

Karin Humphrey:

And look after yourself.

Look after yourself.

Kathryn Hopps:

I was going to say Amelia, not to forget that there are some tools and frameworks and things that can help you in making decisions. So we've talked about Stop, Reflect, Act today, which you can learn more about in a number of our resources, but also, things like the mental health continuum. So in making decisions for wellbeing, the mental health continuum can help us understand, at what point we do need to make a decision. For example, to refer a family and child to other services.

So there are some really handy tools and frameworks for making tricky decisions, and they're there as support mechanisms really.

Amelia Joyce:

Yeah, yeah, and that's actually made me think of the BETLS observation tool, as well. And considering, we use BETLS to unpack what emotions, thoughts, learning, and social relationships are influencing behaviour. But it could actually be really interesting to cast a gaze over, potentially what foundational ethical, concepts are underpinning the behaviours that we see in each other as well.

Just because quite often we judge behaviour not by intention, do we? We judge behaviour by what we see and observe.

Whereas, it could actually be a great way to consider how we, what the intention that people have behind the behaviours that they demonstrate with us. So, yeah, thanks, Kathryn. You sent me off on another tangent. Kyle, what's your take away?

Kyle Ratcliffe:

My key takeaway would be just around that decision fatigue and I actually heard earlier today, compassion fatigue, so you know, when you're a dealer of compassion, it definitely wears on you. So I think thinking about those, and having those in the back of your mind whenever you're making decisions.

And, I think on, on the flip side of that, thinking about children and their decision fatigue, and their compassion fatigue, and then, you know, having a think about how that might be impacting what they're doing and their decisions too.

Amelia Joyce:

That can take me off on another tangent, but we haven't got enough time for the next tangent.

I think the takeaway for me is I had a bit of a light bulb moment. I think when, Karin, you were talking about the things that we do to avoid making decisions, or what we might procrastinate with

I really want to think a little bit more or reflect a little bit more about how they're potentially triggers for the going, OK, stop. I might be a bit fatigued.

Or, I might be, I might be making decisions too rapidly in those spaces.

So, I think it's, again, and I guess it stems on that self-awareness space and giving that space to take care, but also reflect in those areas.

So, we are winding up, and I would like to thank everyone for participating today, and invite you to stay on the line, and so that you can ask directly any questions that you have in terms of ethical dilemmas and decisions for well-being. I hopefully you can continue to consider how the decisions we make influence our wellbeing and also how our well-being influences those decisions as well. When you do exit today, you'll be prompted to complete the exit survey. So when you complete that, if you are watching as a group because we know a lot of you do watch as a group, please include the names of anyone who's watching with you and then we can make sure they also get certificates sent through. As many of you know, these webinars are great way to learn, reflect and put learning into action.

They're also great for demonstrating individual commitment to continued professional development with Be You too.

So, we would like to thank you very much for attending today, and we would love to hear how you put the learning that you've reflected about today into action. So touch base, with Be You consultants, via other events, and communities to let us know as well.

You can also, I'm not sure if you've heard, that you can also support documentation and guide the whole service or school professional learning, and continuous improvement with the support of Be You. So please contact our team today.

If you want to find out some more about that, we've got some different ways that you can engage in those spaces if your school or service isn't a registered participating service, and you would like to know, please just check out the link that will be popped in the chat. Oh, yes, it's, there it is. <https://beyou.edu.au>. There is a contact form you can actually fill in and we can reach out to give you some more information if you're requiring that. Finally, and I'm not sure if they're still called national check-ins or not, we're in a process of having some exciting things happening in our event space, so make sure you also jump onto the Events part of the website for Be You as well.

Because we, while we have national check ins, we are having now implementation support sessions, and spotlights will be rolling out over the coming weeks and months. So there's some great new engaging ways and spaces in that, and Kathryn, Karin, and Kyle might be just one of those people in those waiting rooms with you.

And Be You consultants are a great source of being able to unpack anything that you're doing in those spaces, and they're actually really great at spotting the learning and action. If you do think, oh, I'm not sure what we've done in this Be You space, always a consultant is handy to go 'well, actually, I think you've been doing more than what you think you have'. It is often easier to have a pair of outside ears and eyes to notice all the great things that are happening in your spaces.

So, are there any final words, comments, or anything from any of our panellists?

Before we head into the chat, and discussion space? We've got 60 seconds.

Kathryn Hopps:

I think just following up from what someone's put in the chat box, but also something I said right at the beginning: it's been a really great opportunity today to make something visible, which is kind of invisible and that's these ethical positions. The ethical positions, but also all these different things that are influencing decision making, and someone in the chat box already said, it's really good to know, really helps me understand where different people are coming from, why some people might not agree with the decision that's been made. So, yeah, it's really been a nice opportunity to talk about something, that otherwise, we might not have had the opportunity to talk about.

Amelia Joyce:

Yes, I always walk away from these webinars learning, learning lots.

So, thank you, everyone.

End Transcript