**Ethics Matter - Rotary**

**Module 2**

*“Ethics evolve naturally, and we trample upon them with laws created by reason and experience”*

*Winston Churchill*

**Reporting an accident:**

Many of us have been involved in situations where we scratch another car on the way out of a tight spot in a parking area. The ethical question is whether to inform the owner of the car and, if so, how to do it.

These incidents create ethical dilemmas because the way we deal with them says a lot about our character and whether we act in our own interests or the interests of others.

As the following situation illustrates, the way we react may depend on whether anyone was watching.

Consider the following facts to get started. You pulled out of a tight space in a parking lot and dented the car next to you. You’re quite sure no one saw you. What would you do?

Some people may be tempted to simply leave and avoid the hassle of reporting the incident. This is especially true if the accident will cause insurance rates to go up. Ignoring the situation may be the easiest solution but is it the most ethically appropriate?

**Let’s change the facts**:

Now you think someone may have witnessed the incident. [**Should you report the accident now?**](https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/safety_and_prevention/safe_and_secure/road_safety/crash_reporting_faqs) One reason for doing so is if you leave the scene without reporting it to the police or at least leaving a note for the driver you may have violated the law.

In most states, you need to make a reasonable effort to identify the owner of the vehicle and notify them about what happened. If you are unable to find the owner, you should leave a written notice with your contact information.

What if you’re a risk-taker and still don’t want to report it? How would you feel if someone did witness the event? Now you can be charged with leaving the scene of an accident.

Still not sure what you would do? Imagine that your child is in the car. She/he is aware that you scratched the other car on the way out of the parking lot. Would that change what you would do?

Most people now say they would at least leave a note for the other driver with contact information. After all, you want to send the right ethical message to your child and take responsibility for your action.

Ethically speaking, it shouldn’t matter whether someone witnessed what you did or not.

Doing the right thing is not relative to the situation but is based on the ethical standards of honesty, integrity, and, in the case of the car accident, personal responsibility.

A person of integrity acts on principle about right and wrong and accepts the consequences of their actions.

A good way to check your behaviour before acting is to ask how you would feel if your action was discussed on [**social media**](https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/avoid-social-media-fails). Would you be proud to defend it?

Anticipating how our actions become public is important to ethical behaviour because most people want to be respected for their actions and leaving the scene is likely to create a negative response by those in the know.

*The moral of the story is ethics is easier said than done.*

***Paul Rogers***

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