**WE ARE WHAT WE READ**

**Ethical Decision Making: Breakout Room Activities**

1. How do you define ethics? How would you define ethics for your students?
2. Why are journalistic ethics important?
3. These are the four ethical principles from the Society for Professional Journalists:

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| **Ethical Principle** | **Key Considerations** |
| **1. Seek truth and report it** | * Verify information before publishing
* Provide context, do not oversimplify stories
* Allow subjects to respond to criticisms or allegations of wrongdoing
* Represent the diversity of human experience
 |
| **2. Minimize Harm** | * Show compassion to the subjects of news stories.
* Recognize that individuals have a greater right to privacy, if they are not public individuals
* Balance individuals’ right to privacy, with the public’s right to know
 |
| **3. Act Independently** | * Avoid conflicts of interest
* Distinguish news from advertising; Prominently label sponsored content
 |
| **4. Be Accountable and Transparent** | * Explain ethical choices to your audience
* Acknowledge mistakes and correct them
 |

1. How could you discuss these ethical principles with your students?

*For younger students consider, one possible prompt is:* “If you were telling me a story about something important that happened to you – let’s say you had a disagreement with a friend or family member – what would you want to tell me about what happened? How would you make sure that you were tell me the whole story?”

1. This is one ethical dilemma that students may be asked to reason about:

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| **Scenario 2: Information to Include When Reporting** Your neighborhood had a devastating fire and your editor asks you to report on this. This fire is the third to occur in the same neighborhood. People say that the fire was caused by houses in the area being built with cheap, shoddy, and easily flammable, building materials. When you get to the scene, you learn that the fire started because a child in the building was playing with matches, unsupervised. You know that reporting this information will impact the family’s ability to recover from the fire and receive insurance money for what happened. Do you report this information? How would you “frame” your story? What would you focus on in your reporting?  |

1. Look at SPJ’s four ethical principles. Which ethical principles are involved here? What would you do in response to this scenario?

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| **Ethical Principle** | **Is each ethical principle relevant in this scenario? If so, how?** |
| **1. Seek truth and report it** |  |
| **2. Minimize Harm** |  |
| **3. Act Independently** |  |
| **4. Be Accountable and Transparent** |  |

1. Why is it important to discuss journalistic ethics with your students?