

# Ethics:

## Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Safety

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# Ethics:

## Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Safety

*(My) Perspectives for 2024 and Beyond*



*Today's challenge is to get you to think, not necessarily agree...*

The background of the slide features a stylized illustration. On the left, a dark silhouette of a person stands on the edge of a cliff, looking out over a vast landscape. The sky is a gradient of blue and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The horizon line is visible in the distance.

# Ethics:

## Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Safety

*Introductory Comments*

***The Bathsheba Syndrome...***

# Up or Down?

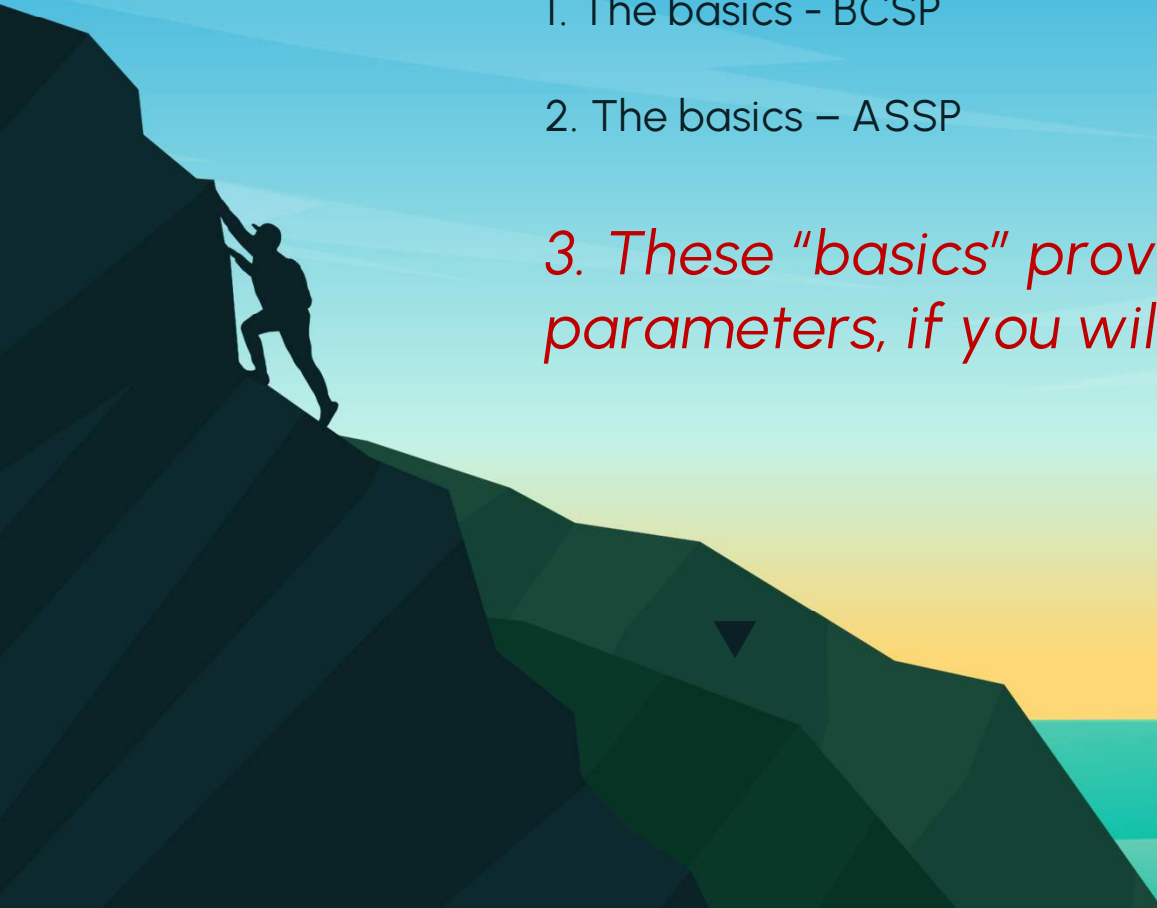


# Perspectives

1. The basics - BCSP

2. The basics – ASSP

*3. These "basics" provide fences,  
parameters, if you will*



# Ethics and Ethical Behavior

**BCSP** | Board of Certified®  
Safety Professionals

— Since 1969 —

## *Code of Ethics*

This code sets forth the code of ethics and professional standards to be observed by holders of documents of certification conferred by the Board of Certified Safety Professionals. Certificants shall, in their professional activities, sustain and advance the integrity, honor, and prestige of the profession by adherence to these standards:

1. **HOLD** paramount the safety and health of people, the protection of the environment and protection of property in the performance of professional duties and exercise their obligation to advise employers, clients, employees, the public, and appropriate authorities of danger and unacceptable risks to people, the environment, or property.
2. **BE** honest, fair, and impartial; act with responsibility and integrity. Adhere to high standards of ethical conduct with balanced care for the interests of the public, employers, clients, employees, colleagues, and the profession. Avoid all conduct or practice that is likely to discredit the profession or deceive the public.
3. **ISSUE** public statements only in an objective and truthful manner and only when founded upon knowledge of the facts and competence in the subject matter.
4. **UNDERTAKE** assignments only when qualified by education or experience in the specific technical fields involved. Accept responsibility for their continued professional development by acquiring and maintaining competence through continuing education, experience, professional training, and keeping current on relevant legal issues.
5. **AVOID** deceptive acts that falsify or misrepresent their academic or professional qualifications. Not misrepresent or exaggerate their degree of responsibility in or for the subject matter of prior assignments. Presentations incident to the solicitation of employment shall not misrepresent pertinent facts concerning employers, employees, associates, or past accomplishments with the intent and purpose of enhancing their qualifications and their work.
6. **CONDUCT** their professional relations by the highest standards of integrity and avoid compromise of their professional judgment by conflicts of interest. When becoming aware of professional misconduct by a BCSP certificant, take steps to bring that misconduct to the attention of the Board of Certified Safety Professionals.
7. **ACT** in a manner free of bias, discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status or any characteristic protected by the law of the applicable jurisdiction.
8. **SEEK** opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and work for the advancement of the safety, health, and well-being of their community and their profession by sharing their knowledge and skills.

Approved by the BCSP Board of Directors March 26, 2020



# Ethics and Ethical Behavior

## Code of Professional Conduct

- Serve the public, employees, employers, clients, the Society, and the profession, with fidelity, honesty, and impartiality.
- Treat others with respect, civility, and without discrimination or harassment in all professional relationships.
- Abstain from behavior that will unjustly cause harm to the reputation of the Society, its members, and the profession.
- Continually improve professional knowledge, skills, competencies, and awareness of relevant new developments, through training, education, networking, and work experiences.
- Consider qualifications before undertaking any professional activity and perform only those services that may be handled competently.
- Make informed decisions in the performance of professional duties that adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and recognized standards of practice.
- Inform all appropriate parties when professional judgment indicates that there is an unacceptable level of risk of injury, illness, property damage, or environmental harm.
- Maintain the confidentiality of information acquired through professional practice that is designated, or generally recognized as, non-public, confidential or privileged.
- Accurately represent professional qualifications including education, credentials, designations, affiliations, titles, and work experience.
- Avoid situations that create actual, potential, or perceived, conflicts between personal and professional interests, and if a potential conflict of interest arises disclose all applicable facts to potentially affected parties.

Violation of this Code of Professional Conduct in circumstances involving ASSP or its affiliates or their events or resources are subject to discipline pursuant to ASSP Standard Operating Guidelines.

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Approved By | Date: Board of Directors | 1/2024  
Replaces Edition Dated: 06/2012  
Next Review Due: 1/2027

# Ethics:

## Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Safety

*The lack of ethical behavior results in:*

- *An erosion of faith and trust*
- *An erosion of relationships*
  - *An erosion of support*
- *An erosion of 'sound' decision-making*





# Ethics:

## Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Safety

### *Origins*

***“The concept of operational excellence seeks to create predictable and reliable behaviors. Operational excellence is defined as doing the right thing, at the right way, every time, even when no one is watching.”***

***- Jazeri, Liu and Dadi***

# Ethikos

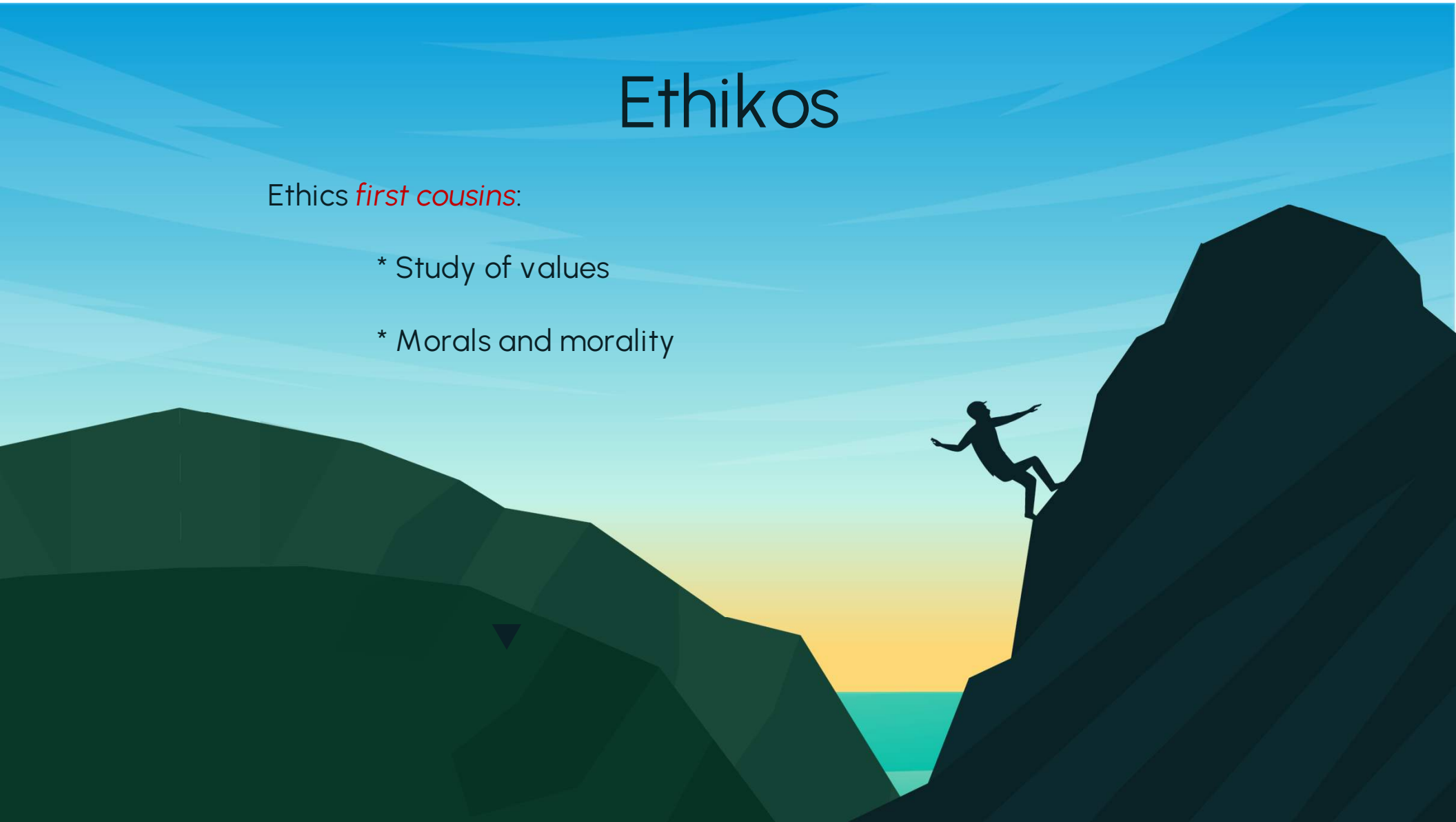
1. Greek
2. "arising from habit"
3. "custom or character"
4. In philosophy – "do good"



# Ethikos

Ethics *first cousins*:

- \* Study of values
- \* Morals and morality



# Is now a good time to talk about ethics?

***“Ethics requires that you ask yourself, what kind of person do I want to see in the mirror in the morning?”***

***- Adi Ignatious, editor in chief, Harvard Business Review***



# Why focus on ethics now?

Dan Snyder: "Ethical reflection creates an immediate benefit for the individual, who through reflection, can discover other possibilities of being and behaving."

Consultant's Business Development Guide

## Decision-making – making good decisions first and not repeating history

- Triangle Shirt Waist Factory Fire
- Bhopal
- Challenger
- Columbia
- So many others...



Did any of these events include questionable ethics??



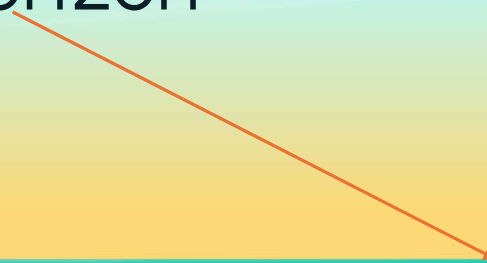
# Ethics in Safety – I Think We are Faced With Enormous Challenges

1. Thoughts and thoughtfulness
2. Perspectives
3. What we may have to deal with
4. What will we do differently?



# Why focus on ethics now?

1. Decision-making
2. Leadership
3. Looking over the horizon



# Thoughts on why an ethics discussion now?

## 1. Decision-making

### - Station Night Club Fire?





# Why focus on ethics now?

1. Decision-making

2. Leadership



# Discuss ethics now?

1. Decision-making

2. Leadership

3. Looking over the horizon –

*"Foresight is ethically neutral – it is an awesome power that can be put to work for great good or great evil." (Suddendorf, et al in The Invention of Tomorrow.*

*Looking over the horizon – is it an ethical issue?  
Maybe?*



# Why focus on ethics now? Things are happening...

1. Entropy
2. Pressure – internal and external
3. *Technology*

*Let's dive into a little more deeply*



# Entropy

- Say what?
- A gradual decline into disorder
- Lack of order or predictability, but all is not lost:

*"... you can manage it (entropy) more effectively to increase your organization's effectiveness."*

- Bill Currence, 9-28-18  
CCO Cornerstone



# Pressure

- Leadership

"So when we say leaders are always creating culture, we don't mean that leaders are always *trying* to create culture. We don't mean that leaders are always *thinking* about the culture. We don't mean that leaders always have a program to *work on their culture*. Quite to the contrary, we mean that leaders are always creating culture, for better or worse, whether they intend to or not."

- Thomas R. Krause and Kristen J. Bell, *7 Insights into Safety Leadership*

(Note: My highlights and underlines, not the authors.)



# *Pressure*

- Leadership
- Financial
- Social
- Personal
- Generational
- Relationships
- Complex systems



# Technology (are all advancements good ones'?)

- As Bob Dylan said, "*These times they are a changin'*"
  - Complex systems
  - Emerging technologies – IoT and IIoT
  - AI, and
  - Machine learning (have we reached singularity?)
- Cyber issues
- Hyper personalization
- Big data





## *Kissinger et al (See bibliography)*

- "(AI) It is an enabler."
- "The characteristics of AI – including its capacity to learn, evolve and surprise – will disrupt and transform *them* all. The outcome will be the alteration of human identity and the human experience of reality at levels not experienced since the dawn of the modern age."

(*Them* in this quote refers to scientific research, education, manufacturing, law enforcement, transportation, defense, politics and more.)



# Ethics:

## Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Safety

*What **puts** us on the slippery slope to poor decisions and questionable ethics?*

# Well?

*Is it entropy?  
Is it pressure?  
Is it technology?*

*Or are these excuses?*



# Ethics:

*What keeps us on the slippery slope?*



# Ethics

*How do we continue the climb upward,  
toward consistent ethical behavior and  
good decisions?*



# The "ethical beacon"?

(an ethical commitment to...)

Community  
Accountability  
Respect  
Leadership  
Excellence





# Thank you – climb on!

Feel free to reach out – [dhopwood@somo-intl.com](mailto:dhopwood@somo-intl.com) or  
619.375.9540

# Some Resources

- 1) BCSP - Code of Ethics ([BCSPcodeofethics.pdf](#))
- 2) ASSP – Code of Professional Conduct ([Code of Professional Conduct \(assp.org\)](#))
- 3) Review your organization's policies and procedures
- 4) Hawk, Richard, Stick to Your Guns, All About You, Safety and Health May 2024, page 40, National Safety Council
- 5) Kissinger, Henry A., Eric Schmidt and Daniel Huttenlocher, *The Age of AI and Our Human Future*, Back Bay Books, Little Brown, 2022
- 6) *HBR at 100: The Most Influential and Innovative Articles from Harvard Business Review's First Century*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, MA, 2022, page 8, Adi Ignatius, Editor in Chief
- 7) Krause, Thomas and Kristen Bell, *7 Insights into Safety Leadership*, The Safety Leadership Institute, 2015, page 37
- 8) Luntz, Stephen, *Why Does Everything Eventually Become Disordered?*, IFLScience, May 18, 2024 (edited by Holly Large)
- 9) Suddendorf, Thomas, Jonathan Redshaw and Adam Bulley, *The Invention of Tomorrow: A Natural History of Foresight*, Basic Books, 2022
- 10) Jazeri, Elyas, Huang Liu and Gabriel B. Dadi, Prioritizing Components of Safety Management Systems, *Journal of Safety, Health and Environmental Research*, Vol. 15, No.1, 2019, pages 362-371



# Some Resources

- 11) Ludwig, Dean C., Clinton J. Longenecker, The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders, Journal of Business Ethics 12:265-273, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993