Sometimes, we can’t see that the eye of the storm is a calm beautiful place; if we can only find our center, it is there if we search hard enough.

I was trekking uphill in a cyclone of fear, a storm within raged as my conscience constantly begged me to stand up and take action in order to be given the freedom, equality, respect and appreciation that I deserved in my marriage. This hill was more of a mountain. The countless, fruitless attempts at progress have starved the landscape; all that remains: a love story ending, three precious children in the middle about to be affected indefinitely by a broken home… on the verge of bankruptcy no less.

The storm raged and the voice in my head gave rise to a vision of brighter days: a strong, competent woman who was empowered to believe in herself, believe in her dream and live life and there was hope for this… with a divorce. Then the unthinkable lightning flashed and hurricane winds swept the feet right out from under me…one night…with a positive pregnancy test…in the middle of life’s hurricane. I was no longer climbing a mountain. I was frozen in time, standing at a crossroads.

My conscience was in turmoil and the future was bleak. I was faced with working through a difficult ethical dilemma at age twenty nine that helped me define the bedrock of my beliefs (though I didn’t see it till now) and became a crucial pillar in the infrastructure of my own “framework for ethical thinking (Framework).”

Now that I’m 35 and all of my children are in school, I’ve returned to college for my degree after a 12 year break of life experience, side jobs, volunteer work, stay at home domestic goddess mothering magic…. and now, I’m learning that it’s “essential
to have a method to ethical decision making (Framework).” Until now, I had never
closely observed and intentionally put into writing, my value system and personal code
of ethics. I find it an impossible question to answer, whether moral judgment can be
clearly defined. It seems true in so many cases that one man’s right is another’s wrong.
Just as one's reality and truth can be shadows on the wall of Plato’s Allegory of the
Cave. It may be that the dilemma I faced is a question for the philosophy of
“Metaethics; the branch of ethics that seeks to understand the nature of ethical
properties, statements, attitudes, and judgments (Ethics film).” David Hume would
argue that moral virtues are feelings that we spread into the world, “The morality of an
act is determined by a feeling we have when we view or think about the act” and that
“these feelings are a part of human nature(Ethics film).” I would agree with Hume, and
say that feelings were at the heart of my search for my truth.

The ethical dilemma that I now faced was one that I imposed upon myself as I
considered an abortion. My sister and mother had both had one. I was with my sister
in the room to support her for this procedure when she was just 18, the same age our
mother was at the time of her decision. I hope both my mother and sister know how
much I believe in the strength and beauty of their souls and I believe that every
journey in life can lead to a more beautiful journey when your heart is full of love and
I know their heart is. This being said, the instant flood of emotions that overtook my
sister's entire body was an experience we could not have prepared for and that
grounded me firmly in the decision that I would never put my soul through it. This
was not a decision based on the idea of the right to life of the unborn, but of the
preservation of a soul at peace. Plato stated that, “all will seek the good, whatever you
do you’ll see some good in it for you.” Ancient ethics is “eudaimonistic”, Aristotle
considered happiness the legitimate aim of moral action, and identified the primary importance of the goods of the soul (Ethics Film).”

The balance scale of my future and the future of my children appeared before me with a heavy weight on both sides. I know I want to be a good mother to my children and it was right to give them all of the opportunities that I can in order for them to succeed in life. This was a huge part of my code of ethics; to be fair, and to be honest in this case with myself about the dire circumstances ahead. How will I give them the love and attention they deserve? How will I bring a child into the world in the middle of divorce and financial strife? The divorce papers were filled out and under the chair, the pre foreclosure forms in the file. How can I subject another child to witnessing a mother oppressed and devalued or be a single mother to four, let alone three children. It was right to put my children first, I had to be there for them when they needed me most. On one hand I weighed the option of the consequence of my actions on my childrens lives and on the other I weighed the consequences on my emotional well being. The idea of terminating the pregnancy carried with it the vision of my sister. It was right to protect myself from that pain. Kidder, author of “Right vs. Right” states,“Tough choices, typically, are those that pit one "right" value against another.”

“Only by careful exploration of the problem, aided by the insights and different perspectives of others, can we make good ethical choices (Framework)”. In this case I believed I recognized the ethical dilemma I faced and that I was seeing all of the facts before me. Five sources for ethical standards (approaches) are described in A Framework For Ethical Thinking. The approach I used to analyze was at the root of “consequentialism; the Utilitarian approach that produces the greatest balances of
good over harm (Framework).” The balancing was very difficult to define. It is said in Rushworth Kidder’s, “How Good People Make tough choices”, that Utilitarianism can also be described as Consequentialism and you cannot determine the “greatest good” without speculating on probable futures. I could have looked through the lense of the “Rights Approach” and thought of the child's right to life, but honestly I only saw this as a potential life of which I had a choice to give a future. This future was the very thing in question. I feared for the future of everyone. A very heavy, torturous weight enveloped me. This pregnancy was the cause of it...I was sure. It was best for the future of my family to move forward. All logic pointed to relieving this overwhelming pain and discontent, doing what what right for the future of most involved, and terminating the pregnancy.

Feet in stirrups, exposed and bare I lay on the crinkly paper of the doctors office.... waiting. Like a long rain in winter, the river of emotions swelled and began to overflow. The dam broke and my uncontrollable tears sent a different message. My body; my heart... was, at it's core, against this decision. The storm of financial and marital discord vanished from view and my body grieved for the child that I wouldn't know, that was just as beautiful, just as worthy of my mothering protection and love. The love remained despite the risk. It was too painful to follow through with my “logical” decision; already having children of my own, and she was already one of them. They represented her. My heart had spoken.

I left immediately and and very thankful to the sweet nurse who validated these emotions by stating that I wasn't ready. I shook my head in agreement promptly rising from the cold paper and as I exited the door of the facility the heavy weight that I beared instantly fell away just as the heavy weight of the door closed behind me. I
realized... it wasn't the *fact* that the future was bleak and that I was pregnant, that made me feel so miserable, it was the fact that I was considering not being so. My husband throughout the entire heart wrenching process was as sweet, gentle and supportive as he could be. He stood with a quiet strength, supporting whatever decision I made.... and we drove away with a smile...together.

I have learned to pay attention and value my emotional discontents and to explore their origins more thoroughly. Miscommunications happen within ourselves just as much as with others. The moment I left the building the world was brighter place and I reach out now to say to anyone, no matter your experience or decision: to find the brighter place is always within you. I believe the shared connections we have with others can help guide our journey as we withhold judgement of ourselves and others.

The storm passed, and seven years later it turns out this little life inspired a more energetic search for peace, compatibility and cohesion that saved our marriage. This is not to say that all of our children don’t do that every day. However, there seemed in our situation a lesson to be learned that needed her presence to push it over the top. I’d like to argue that *too much* responsibility can give rise to unfathomable capability.

According to Aristotle in his theory of ethical decision making; The Golden Mean: “Moral behavior is the mean between two extremes - at one end is excess, at the other deficiency. Find a moderate position between those two extremes, and you will be acting morally (Ethics film).”...although, at the time, there seemed not to be a middle road or third choice in my ethical dilemma. Kidder claims that “resolutions often arise when, in analyzing an apparently stark, rigidly bipolar ethical dilemma, we
see a middle way open up between the two rights.” I don’t know how else to explain
the phenomena of my decision other than, I couldn’t see through the blinding storm
and this third option found me. I believe my heart made a choice based on my
personal situation and experience despite my brain.

Perhaps Aristotle’s, Golden Mean could be described as finding the eye in the
storm; this peaceful center of balance is defined within ourselves, in everything we do
and say. Through constant and consistent reevaluation we find redefinition and this
goes for the very problems we are trying to solve.

It has been seven years and I could never have predicted the happiness and
depth of love we have today. The future can be very unpredictable and this is one
argument against Utilitarianism, or “Ends-based” resolutions that attempt to speculate
possible futures. Although I don’t disagree with this approach, my experiences have
led me to look more through the lens of a “Care-based”; empathy driven value system
(Kidder).

People and situations transform over time. I discovered self empowerment
through communication and I am lucky to have a partner who listened and cared
enough to transform with me. The source of strength, confidence and belief in myself
and my dreams that I searched for in the beginning was within me all along. The
source being self empowerment and the barrier being my own insecurity. Looking
back and all around me, I see common threads of miscommunication throughout all
relationships.

Having recognized the miscommunication within myself, it is easy to see the
value of conscious, active problem solving, as an individual and with others. Through
self exploration I have learned to define my values and thus my code of ethics. I value
forgiveness, acceptance and love and these virtues and are luckily now sustained on both sides of our relationship and continue to work for our marriage. Also empathy, honesty and communication are deeply entrenched in my code of ethics, and therefore, someday, when she is old enough, and the moment is right, I will delicately tell her the story of how we realized she was our missing puzzle piece that cleared the clouds, let in the light, and put the big picture; our world, *into focus*. 
First written Code of Ethics
3/15/2015

Withhold judgement of others. Every person has equal intrinsic value to the world.
Recognize and act on opportunities to do good.
Always seek more information and growth through knowledge.
Remain in constant self evaluation while maintaining positive inner dialog.
Be reliable and respectful of my commitments.
Be an active listener.
Have unconditional love and healthy boundaries.
Communicate the value of my relationships with words and actions.
Elevate to my best me I can be whenever I can be it... with balance.
Treasure life and treasure your truth.
Bibliography


