

## Our Ego is Not Our Amigo

**Under pressure, our brain forces us to focus on self-preservation, so we have to practice combatting our ego and neurology and thus create more meaningful relationships.**

The essence of ethics concerns our relationships with others. One simple test of character is whether we put others before self, at least most of the time. This includes strangers, foreigners, even those who disrespect us, and not just family and friends. We treat others—all others—with respect, even when they don't plan to return the favor.

Compliance training presents ethics as “What should we do?” and “Why should we do it?” The harder question is this: “What does it take to make us virtuous, given all the distractions, temptations, and complexities that lie in our path?” If ethics were as simple as compliance training suggests, then acting with justice and compassion would be easy. But it isn't.

The compliance model of ethics is limited because it overlooks the fact that when rules collide with habits, habits usually win. To overcome our habits, we have to practice. Just as bridge builders improve by building more bridges and surgeons provide higher surgical quality and better outcomes by performing more surgeries, we become more just by doing just acts.

Our knowledge will not save us from ourselves. Like eating right, exercising regularly, and getting adequate sleep, virtue is less about what we know and more about how we live. We need to become better by practicing what we know is right and putting the concerns of others—all others—before self.

