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Common App Essay Prompt #7: *Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.*

Topic Chosen: *Describe an ethical dilemma that you have personally encountered. What alternatives did you consider, and why? DO NOT tell us what you decided to do.*

As a sophomore in high school, I began looking for part-time work after school in order to earn a little money and begin saving for college. I would often tutor junior high students in English, as I had especially good English scores among my peers in South Korea. I generally found this work enjoyable and quite lucrative, yet there was one student whose behavior presented me with an ethical dilemma.

This student, who I will call Kyle, had been struggling in English classes. He couldn't understand some of the grammar points, and his scores had been lower than normal. His mother hired me to help him prepare for classes and improve his overall English abilities, especially his writing. Kyle did not seem interested in English, and it was therefore hard to motivate him. I began by helping him find the answers to the questions on his homework, and I also helped him compose longer essays various topics. Over time, however, I found that he was relying on me to supply the answers to the questions, putting little effort in himself.

This turned into an ethical dilemma when we were working on an essay. Because he was unable to start the essay, I helped him by providing an opening sentence. Then, to get more ideas flowing, I would add more and more ideas, coaching him to present his own ideas. I soon realized, however, that I was essentially writing this essay for him. This was clearly unethical from my point of view, as Kyle's mother had hired me not to simply help with his homework, but rather to strengthen his English abilities and mold him into a better writer. I was confronted with two options: I could continue helping this student, knowing that his improved grades would reflect positively on me as a teacher, and that I could keep this well-paying job indefinitely; or, I could refuse to continue doing his work for him, explaining the situation to his mother and quite possibly losing this part-time job, which I sorely needed at the time.

In this case, as with many ethical dilemmas, the least ethical option—continuing to contribute much of the content of the student's homework—was the easier path to take. This is because it offered greater personal gain and required the least amount of conflict. Choosing to confront the student, on the other hand, could result in an unpleasant situation and the potential loss of much-needed employment. While wrestling with these issues in my mind, I came to a much clearer understanding of how the pressures of society, family, and work test people's integrity and influence otherwise decent people to make choices that may be considered unethical.