

Ethical Usage

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Ethical Usage

Emotional appeals are very powerful. When you stir sympathy in your listeners, you encourage them to identify with your message on a visceral level, bypassing intellectual filters, such as skepticism and logic.

However, this may be unethical because you are not allowing your listeners to logically consider your argument and rationally determine how they would react to your argument in absence of an emotional appeal.

It may be appealing to take a shortcut toward making the audience sympathize with your point of view. An emotional appeal may save you the trouble of working out a good argument. However, emotional appeals don't always hold up well after the fact when your audience has had a chance to process your message.

Therefore, be sure to substantiate your emotional appeal with both logic and facts.

Emotional Manipulation

Since emotional appeals are very strong, they can sometimes be used inappropriately in order to gain something from the audience members.



Manipulation

Adolf Hitler is an example of a political figure who used emotional manipulation.

For example, an emotional appeal could be used in a political rally to persuade people to vote for the candidate, especially if the vote will happen in the next few days. This emotional appeal may persuade audience members to vote for you or your candidate, but it may also be unethical or considered manipulative if the audience members do not have a chance to rationally process the message before the vote takes place.

This is especially critical for situations, such as politics, which people generally have emotionally charged opinions about.

Some inappropriate uses of manipulative techniques of emotional appeals include:

- Lying or lying by omission: telling outright falsehoods or misleading by leaving out crucial pieces of information.
- Denial: refusing to admit that you or your affiliates have done anything wrong.
- Covert intimidation: using subtle, indirect or implied threats.
- Guilt tripping: suggesting that the audience does not care enough, is too selfish, or has it easy. Guilt tripping encourages self-doubt and submissive behavior.
- Shaming: using tactics, such as direct criticism, a fierce look or glance, an unpleasant tone of voice, rhetorical comments, and subtle sarcasm to undermine audience members.
- Playing the victim: putting on the role of a victim of circumstances or the bad behavior of others in order to evoke sympathy.
- Vilifying the victim: acting as though the victim of the bad behavior of your (or your associates) did something to deserve negative consequences.
- Seduction: using charm, praise, and flattery to manipulate others.

In order to ethically portray an emotional appeal, be sure to avoid these inappropriate uses and manipulative techniques for emotional appeals. Emotional appeals can be effective if they are not manipulative and are used to further an honest message.

How to Prove that You are Ethical

Ethos (plural: ethe) is an appeal to the authority or honesty of the presenter. It is how well the presenter convinces the audience that he or she is qualified to present (speak) on the particular subject. It can be done in many ways:

- By being a notable figure in the field in question, such as a college professor or an executive of a company whose business is that of the subject.
- By having a vested interest in a matter, such as the person being related to the subject in question.
- By using impressive logos that show the audience that the speaker is knowledgeable on the topic.
- By appealing to a person's ethics or character.

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TERMS TO KNOW

ethics

The study of principles relating to right and wrong conduct.

ethos

A rhetorical appeal to an audience based on the speaker/writer's credibility.

manipulation

The usage of psychological influence over a person or situation to gain a positive outcome.