

The Long Game

Facilitation Guide

Overview

These case studies are narrative accounts designed to stimulate dialogue about the virtues that shape professional life. They differ importantly from the ethical case studies most faculty and students encounter in professional training. Rather than presenting a moral dilemma to be resolved, each case illustrates the presence—or absence—of a particular virtue as it operates in everyday practice. The goal is not to reach a verdict on what a character should have done, but to explore what a virtue looks like in action—and what may be at stake when it is absent.

Cases are organized by virtue and professional context, but many will resonate beyond their primary category. A case about curiosity in a business setting may illuminate curiosity in medicine or law. Instructors are encouraged to use cases flexibly and across disciplines.

General Facilitation Tips

- **Focus on virtue, not verdict.** Keep discussion centered on how the virtue appears (or is absent) in the case, not on whether the character made the right call. If the conversation drifts toward “what should they have done?” redirect gently.
- **Start with observation.** Open by asking what students noticed before asking what they think. Grounding early discussion in specific moments from the case prevents premature judgment.
- **Use questions as starting points, not a script.** Follow student energy. If a student raises a more generative question than the ones provided, pursue it.
- **Push back on easy agreement.** If the room converges too quickly, the case’s complexity may not have been fully engaged. Invite students to complicate their own claims and consider opposing readings.
- **Invite connection to professional life.** The richest moments often come when students link the case to patterns they’ve observed or anticipate: “I’ve seen something like this when . . .”
- **Let silence work.** Resist the urge to fill every pause. Students often need a moment to arrive at their most substantive responses.
- **Close with reflection.** Reserve a few minutes to ask students what will stay with them — a question, an image, an unresolved tension. A sentence or two naming what they now understand about the virtue that they didn’t before is a strong closing move.

Discussion Questions

1. Elena distinguishes patience from stubbornness, defining patience as understanding something about time that others do not. Is that a sufficient distinction, and how would she know which one she is actually practicing?
2. Elena's plan is working, but not on the timeline the institution requires. Who bears responsibility for that mismatch, and what does patience require of a leader when the system around her is not willing to wait?
3. Elena is about to make a case for more time without apology. Is that an act of patience, courage, or both? What is the relationship between courage and patience?
4. Is there a version of this case in which Elena's patience is not a virtue but a liability? What would that version look like, and how would she distinguish it from the one she is living?

Facilitation of this Case

Start with the distinction Elena draws between patience and stubbornness. She defines patience as understanding something about time that the people pushing you do not, and stubbornness as holding a position simply because you committed to it. That distinction is the intellectual center of the case and deserves careful attention before the discussion moves anywhere else. Ask students whether they find it convincing, and more importantly, whether Elena herself can reliably tell which one she is practicing. The case does not resolve that question, and it should not be resolved too quickly in discussion either.

Keep the discussion inside the case. Students will sometimes reach for exits—suggesting that Elena should find a different company, negotiate different metrics with Carl before taking the job, or simply accept that the timeline is unrealistic and move on. Those may be reasonable observations, but they are not what the case is asking. The more productive conversation happens within the situation as it exists: this division, this call, this Friday. Redirect students who reach for the exit by asking what patience requires of Elena given where she actually is.

Explore the relationship between patience and courage. The third discussion question asks whether Elena's decision to make the case for more time without apology is an act of patience, courage, or both. This is worth spending time on because the two virtues can look similar from the outside while being quite different on the inside. Patience is about time and understanding; courage is about risk and self-exposure. Ask students whether Elena needs both to do what she is about to do, and whether either one is sufficient on its own.

Use the liability question to complicate the virtue. The final discussion question asks students to imagine a version of this case in which Elena's patience is not a virtue but a liability. This is a strong discussion move because it forces students to articulate what distinguishes patient

leadership from mere delay, avoidance, or an unwillingness to read a situation honestly. Ask them to be specific about what that version of the story would look like, and what signals Elena herself should be watching for.