MORAL DILEMMA

Definition:

     Dilemmas are situations in which moral reasons come into conflict, or in which the application of moral values are problems, and one is not clear of the immediate choice or solution of the problems.
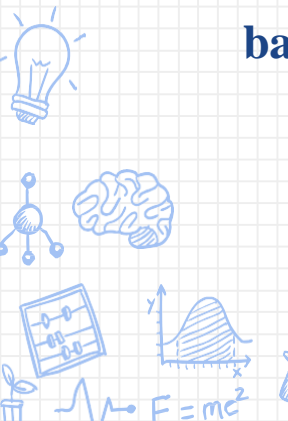
✗ Moral reasons could be rights, duties, goods or obligations.

✗ These situations do not mean that things had gone wrong, but they only indicate the presence of moral complexity.

✗ This makes the decision making complex.

For example, a person promised to meet a friend and dine, but he has to help his uncle who is involved in an accident-one has to fix the priority.

The three complex situations leading to moral dilemmas are:

✗ The problem of *vagueness*: One is unable to distinguish between good and bad (right or wrong) principle. Good means an action that is obligatory.

For example, code of ethics specifies that one should obey the laws and follow standards. Refuse bribe or accept the gift, and maintain confidentiality.

✗ The problem of conflicting reasons: One is unable to choose between two good moral solutions. One has to fix priority, through knowledge or value system.

The problem of disagreement: There may be two or more solutions and none of them mandatory. These solutions may be better or worse in some respects but not in all aspects. One has to interpret, apply different morally reasons, and analyze and rank the decisions.

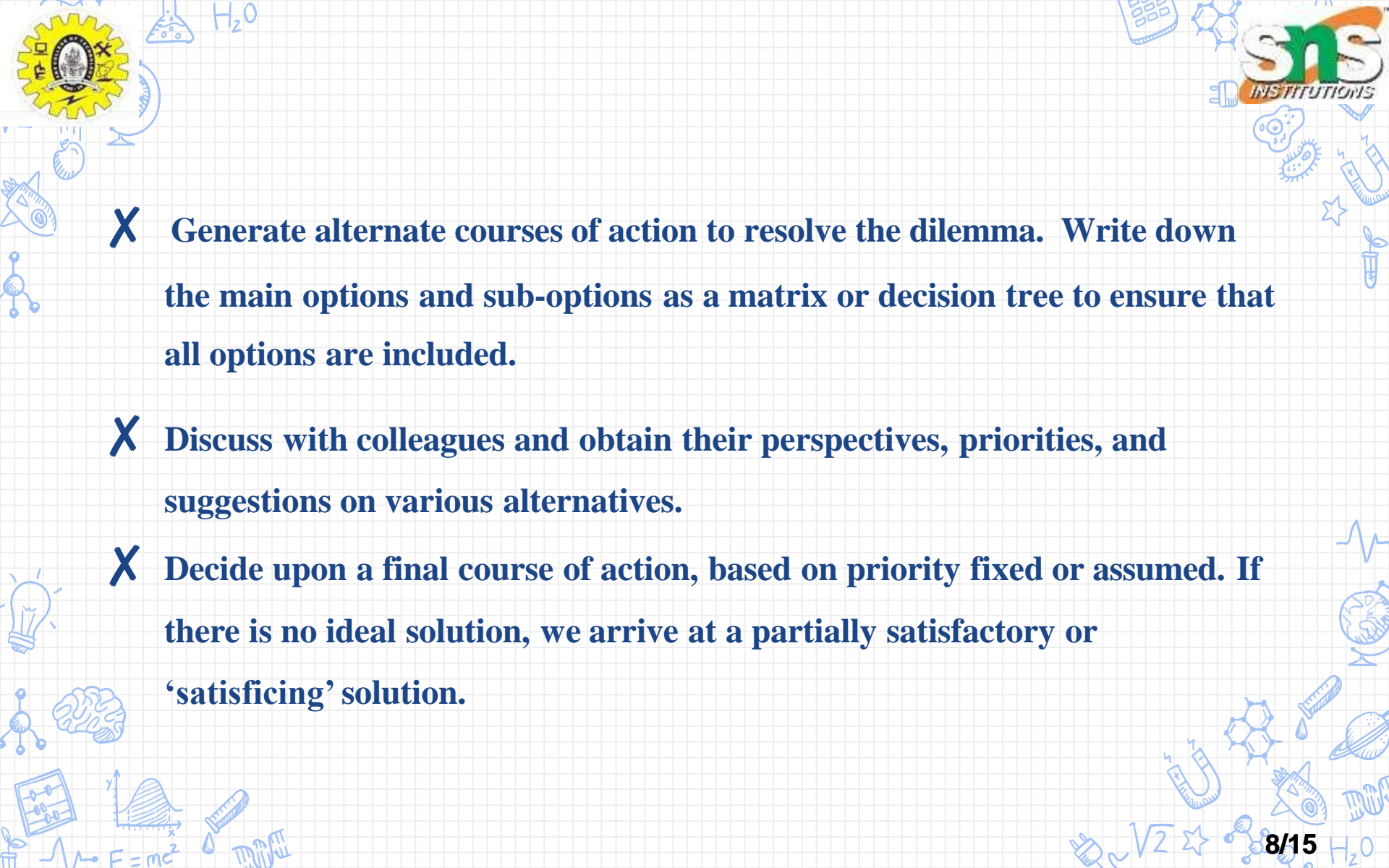Select the best suitable, under the existing and the most probable conditions.

Steps to Solve Dilemma :

The logical steps in confronting moral dilemma are:

✗ Identification of the moral factors and reasons. The clarity to identify the relevant moral values from among duties, rights, goods and obligations is obtained (conceptual inquiry).

✗ The most useful resource in identifying dilemmas in engineering is the professional codes of ethics, as interpreted by the professional experience. Another resource is talking with colleagues who can focus or narrow down the choice of values.

✗ **Collection of all information, data, and facts (factual inquiry) relevant to the situation.**

✗ **Rank the moral options i.e., priority in application through value system, and also as obligatory, all right, acceptable, not acceptable, damaging, and most damaging etc. For example, in fulfilling responsibility, the codes give prime importance to public safety and protection of the environment, as compared to the individuals or the employers (conceptual inquiry).**

✗ **Generate alternate courses of action to resolve the dilemma. Write down the main options and sub-options as a matrix or decision tree to ensure that all options are included.**

✗ **Discuss with colleagues and obtain their perspectives, priorities, and suggestions on various alternatives.**

✗ **Decide upon a final course of action, based on priority fixed or assumed. If there is no ideal solution, we arrive at a partially satisfactory or 'satisficing' solution.**