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## How Good People Make Tough Choices

by [Rushworth M. Kidder](#)

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### Reviews and Commentary for *How Good People Make Tough Choices*

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#### From [Booklist](#) , 09/01/94:

Since retiring from the *Christian Science Monitor*, Kidder has been thinking about uplift and improvement of (fallen) humans. He cites polls that show how far we've slipped when majorities admit to turpitude at school or work. So his thoughts aim to frame the moral dilemmas middle-age adults are apt to encounter in the middle management positions they tend to occupy, such as school principal or business department manager. Kidder sorts his examples of dilemmas into four categories: truth vs. loyalty/justice vs. mercy, short- vs. long-term views, and the individual vs. the community. To shade in the last outline, he recounts a story of a reference librarian who gave a caller some info on rape laws, and a police officer investigating a recent rape who wanted the caller's name as a possible suspect: what to do--protect the community or protect the caller's privacy? Kidder names three ways to decide: following the golden rule, following a utilitarian ethic, or following a "rule-based" ethic. By applying his methods, Kidder believes, his readers will develop "ethical fitness" and be ready to handle the difficult questions of right versus right as soon as they develop. A timely tome, with ethics seminars all the rage.

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#### From [Kirkus Reviews](#) , 12/15/94:

Whatever happened to the discipline of ethics? At a time when moral questions tend to be argued with more heat than light, Kidder offers practical guidelines for a coherent and mindful approach to ethical dilemmas. In the early morning hours of April 26, 1986, two electrical engineers, working [http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN%3D0688134424/c.../4222-3/2/156-82441\\_26-01-1998](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN%3D0688134424/c.../4222-3/2/156-82441_26-01-1998)

at the control panel of Reactor Number Four at Chernobyl, overrode six separate alarm systems to see how long the turbine would free-wheel when the power was removed. For Kidder (Shared Values for a Troubled World, not reviewed), the ensuing catastrophe is a parable of why ethics matters. Founder of the Institute for Global Ethics, he deals not so much with the problem of choosing between right and wrong as with the daily dilemmas of choosing between right and right. Should I always tell all the truth? Should I divulge professional information that may help others but will certainly ruin an individual's life? Kidder spotlights the contemporary concern for ethical standards in corporations while guiding us through the thought of Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, and others. He posits four models for dilemmas of right vs. right: the clashes between truth and loyalty, individual and community, short-term and long-term goods, justice and mercy. He goes on to propose three principles he believes will enable us to resolve moral dilemmas: consideration of the likely consequences of our decision, knowledge of the laws of conduct, and adherence to the Golden Rule that we should do as we would be done to. Finally, Kidder lays out a practical scheme for approaching problematic situations and looks at complex modern questions such as computer hacking and ways of combatting AIDS. He offers no answers, instead giving readers a program for energetic self-reflection. A brilliant and practical synthesis that squarely faces all the issues and can be grasped by the thoughtful nonspecialist. -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

### Synopsis:

When you're late for work, do you stop to help a stranded motorist? Do you vote for a policy that helps America but throws your neighbor out of work? Complicated choices like these are some of the toughest dilemmas people face. Now, a former senior columnist for the Christian Science Monitor shows how to find the right answers to even the toughest ethical problems.

### Card catalog description

How Good People Make Tough Choices offers the practical tools for careful deliberation of the ethical predicaments of daily living. It is a book for those who want to address and resolve tough choices through energetic self-reflection.

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