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Good Kids, Tough Choices: How Parents Can Help Their Children Do the Right Thing

Rushworth M. Kidder
Jossey-Bass (September 2010)
Softcover $16.95 (272pp)
978-0-470-54762-5

Raising children in today's moral environment can be a challenge. In a world that seems to be losing the ability to choose right over wrong, parents long to raise kids who have integrity and character. But how can a parent compete with peer and media pressure?

Good Kids, Tough Choices: How Parents Can Help Their Children Do the Right Thing, tackles the subject of ethical parenting. This well-written book gives readers a clear, practical framework for teaching children about moral values throughout childhood and beyond. The author, Rushworth M. Kidder, believes teaching children to know what is right, to make tough choices, and develop moral courage are the keys to "ethical fitness."

To raise "good kids," parents must first understand their own value systems, and then make sure to consciously pass them on to their children. In Kidder's view, parents have an obligation to confirm and reconfirm their values as their children mature and encounter more complex circumstances. It takes moral courage to face and stand firm under peer and social pressure, and children need to know that they are not alone.

The book is divided into age-group chapters and explains how morality can be taught in age-appropriate ways. Real-life stories illustrate the challenges parents face. For example, a story about three-year-old Branson, who picks up a little mesh bag of gold foil-covered chocolate coins at the store, and his mother, who responds in a clear but loving way, teaches an important lesson about teaching the youngest of children.

Another mother relates how her small-framed thirteen-year-old came home from a movie with his best friend and his friend's mother, who had passed him off as eleven years old to get the child-priced ticket. The boy's dilemma and his mother's response are part of a healthy discussion about ethics and behavior.

Good Kids, Tough Choices ends with a concise conclusion, followed by "Top Ten Tips for Ethical Parenting," a resource list, a glossary of frequently used terms, and helpful discussion ideas. This book's thorough, practical approach and clear writing make it a top-notch resource for a family or library bookshelf.

Rushworth M. Kidder is founder and president of the Institute for Global Ethics, a writer and regular contributor to the media on ethics, and the author of ten books on subjects ranging from international ethics to the global future. He holds a doctorate in English and American Literature from Columbia University.
PENNY HASTINGS (November / December 2010)

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