

Making Good Decisions in Tough Times



We all make countless decisions every day. Should you wear a face mask while out in public? Attend a social justice protest? Confront someone you disagree with?

Some of these decisions have relatively minor consequences (good or bad), while other decisions could have significant implications for us and others. A tool like the Character-in-Action Checklist (below) can help you navigate complicated choices and make the right decision.

When making a decision, ask yourself:

- Will my words and actions be honest, sincere, and reliable?
- If the situation was reversed, is this how I would hope to be treated?

- What are the consequences of my words and actions if I make this choice?
- Is my decision fair to everyone involved in and affected by my actions?
- Is my decision expressing compassion and kindness?
- Would I want to live in a world where everyone makes this choice?

Not every decision will align with each of the Six Pillars of Character. They can come into conflict with each other and even themselves. For example, sometimes the right decision isn't fair to everyone involved. However, by identifying that a decision may not be fair, you can address the issue, explain why you made the decision, and provide support to those who perceive the decision as unfair. Or, sometimes the right choice may be contrary to a previous commitment, thus not in alignment with the trustworthiness test. Knowing this can help you determine how to honor your word when your decision doesn't allow you to keep your word.

We're facing troubling times and we can all contribute to the greater good by making sound decisions that reflect our best selves.

CHARACTER-IN-ACTION CHECKLIST: SIX PILLARS



When faced with a choice or dilemma, consider the following:

Would my decisions pass each of these tests?	Yes	No
Trustworthiness Test: Would my words and actions be honest, sincere, and reliable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect Test: If the situation was reversed, is this how I would want to be treated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responsibility Test: What would be the consequences of my words and actions and would I do the right thing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairness Test: Would this be fair to everybody involved in and affected by my actions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caring Test: Would my words and actions express compassion and kindness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citizenship Test: Would I want to live in a world where everybody did this?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What if it's still not clear what to do?

1. Stop!
2. Think it over some more.
3. Seek additional insight from individuals whose integrity you respect.

Adapted from Lickona & Davidson (2005).

Learn more about character education.