

# ROOTED IN DECENCY

## Book Club Discussion Guide

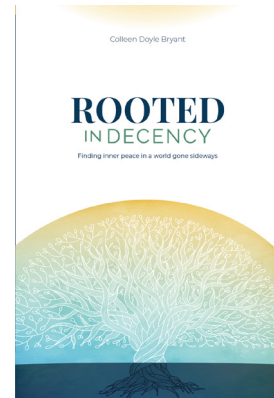
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### Rooted in Decency:

*Finding inner peace in a world gone sideways*

### Synopsis

What happened to common decency? And how do we get to a place of more cooperation and kindness? *Rooted in Decency* reveals some surprising reasons behind why people are acting so divisively toward each other and why that can make life feel so off-balance. Each chapter is a short conversation that presents brilliant insights—from neuroscience to happiness science, from Aristotle to Buddha—that bring new light to today’s moral dilemmas. Taken alone, each chapter offers an “a-ha” insight that can change the tone of how we relate to each other. Or, journey through all the chapters and discover that we do, in fact, share common values—and discover actionable steps that can help society get to a place that’s rooted in decency.



### General tips

Each chapter is structured to share some surprising nuggets that prompt engaging discussions. There are journaling pages at the end of each chapter that could also be used to guide book club conversations, in addition to the discussion points below.

If book club members love a given nugget but can’t remember where it is, the conclusion includes a brief summary of each chapter that highlights the nuggets.

For any chapter, the issues can often be considered from different perspectives. Depending on the tone of your book club, readers may want to explore their own experiences or to discuss examples from family or work. Or, they may prefer to look at the issues in terms of the broader society and current events.

*Rooted in Decency* presents unbiased examples from multiple sides of current events and the notes section includes links to news articles, etc. that validate the sources. Still, it might be smart to set some ground rules to keep the book club discussion polite.

### Discussion Points

1. The subtitle of the book is “Finding inner peace in a world gone sideways.” Did the subtitle resonate with you?
2. The author writes, “I began to wonder, *Do we even share a common idea of right or wrong anymore?*” What do you think? Do the people in our society share a common idea of right and wrong? Did your views change while reading the book?
3. Many of the chapters started with a short dialog or situation. Did you find some of them relatable to your life or to the way people in your life act?

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4. Did any chapter or nugget of insight stand out to you? Was there a particular nugget that you were excited to share with someone else?
5. Part one of *Rooted in Decency* focuses on ways we may be thinking, feeling, and connecting that are throwing us off balance. Did you discover any insights into your own life? How about your understanding of other people, or the broader culture?
6. Did you start doing anything differently in your own life as a result of something you read?
7. The author makes the case that people are happier and feel more stable when they have honesty, respect, responsibility, and reasonable compassion in their lives. Did this prompt any thoughts about the levels of unhappiness, depression, and anxiety in our society today?
8. Part two of the book makes the case that we're not just individuals, we're individuals who live in societies, so we choose to control ourselves so that we can benefit from being part of a society. What do you think? Is it worth it to control yourself and to be a decent person? Do you benefit from living among other people? What if some people are being decent and some are being jerks?
9. Did Haidt's Six Moral Foundations influence your perspective about an issue or of a person with whom you normally disagree?
10. Did anyone play Outrage Word Bingo from the chapter on moral disgust? Did it change your perspective about the information you receive?
11. Were you surprised at all by the biology behind how we identify Us and Them—how it motivates us to perceive other people or how we can change alliances quickly?
12. In part three of *Rooted in Decency*, did anything surprise you about the origins of morality or how similar the moral codes of the world belief systems were?
13. Does the moral compass include the right values? Is there something that's important to you that doesn't seem to have been included?
14. How did you feel about putting each moral value on a continuum between too little and too much of the virtue? Did the continuums clarify any of the moral gray areas?
15. Thinking of some of the current events and examples that were included in *Rooted in Decency*, did you think about any current events differently after reading the book?
16. How did you feel while reading the chapters on public shaming, collective blame, or the mindset of victimization?
17. Did the explanation of the differences between sympathy, empathy, and compassion affect how you would engage with people who are suffering?
18. Did anyone try using the moral compass in *Rooted in Decency* as a guide? In what situations could you use it at home, at work, etc.?

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### Author Bio

Colleen Doyle Bryant is the author of five books and more than 50 learning resources about making good choices for the right reasons. Her Talking with Trees series for elementary students and Truth Be Told Quotes series for teens are used in curriculums to teach good character traits and social emotional skills like honesty, respect, responsibility, and kindness. More than 100,000 of her good values resources are downloaded each year by parents and teachers around the world. Rooted in Decency, Colleen's first book for an adult audience, considers why America's divisive culture is damaging common decency, and how society can get to a shared set of values that promotes cooperation and trust. Colleen has a bachelor's degree in sociology from Duke University.

Learn more at [ColleenDoyleBryant.com](http://ColleenDoyleBryant.com)

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Title: Rooted in Decency: Finding inner peace in a world gone sideways

Published: October 4, 2022

Genres: Nonfiction, Sociology, Self-help, Philosophy, Psychology

Publisher: LoveWell Press

Pages: 338

ISBN print: 978-0-9849056-6-9

ISBN ebook: 978-0-9849056-7-6

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