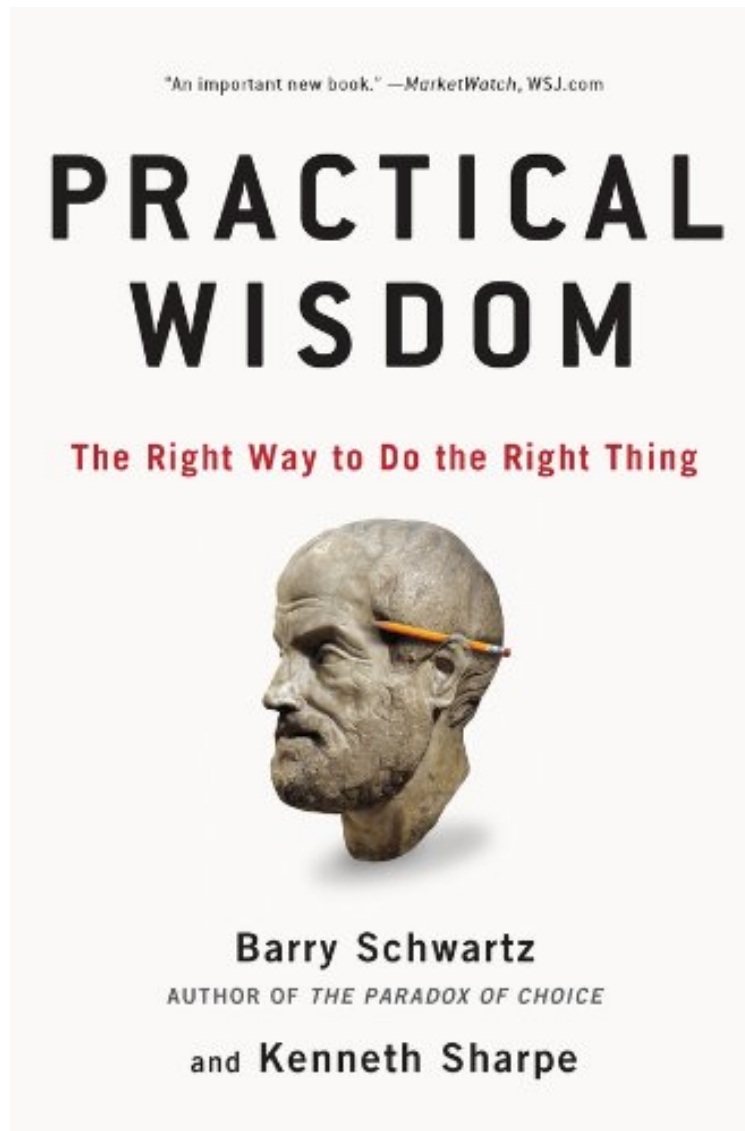


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Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing

Barry Schwartz, Kenneth Sharpe
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Barry Schwartz, Kenneth Sharpe : Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Really fantastic book and overall easy read By TheEasyLife Really fantastic book and overall easy read. Not generally a big book person, but really liked this. I am now using it as a "book club" book with friends as well as my students. 55 of 61 people found the following review helpful. Good Book - But not much new information By Bernard Kwan It makes sense that Barry Schwartz would follow up his previous book on the paradox of choice with this one, which is also about choice, about what is required for good

decision making. The premise of this book is that in many fields such as Medicine, Law, Banking and Education there has been a movement to institute more and more rules and incentives in order to improve performance and improve the bottom line. This has had the unintended consequences of constraining decision making and corrupting the people who work in these fields. He uses examples from psychology experiments (how people start to only focus on financial incentives and less on the moral dimension once money is introduced) and from real life to show how this can be counterproductive, such as the teacher who is constrained by the syllabus as to how each minute of the day is structured (including what words to say) and the judge who is not able to show leniency due to strict rules on sentencing. He calls for a renewed focus on the "telos" or purpose of these professions and greater scope for decision-making and mentoring for the young professionals in each of these fields so they can have the empathy, compassion and discretion to act in the best way for each individual case. Then these professions can become more of a "calling" than just a "job". The best business / pop psychology books, usually have one key idea which is slightly counter-intuitive, which then enters the popular consciousness - such as the 10,000 hours required to become world class from "Outliers" or that too much choice is actually detrimental from "The Paradox of Choice". These then change our view of the world and perhaps our own decision making. (I too can be a great guitarist if I am willing to put in the hours). Unfortunately, at least for HMOs, the legal system and investment banking the issues are already well known and in the public consciousness (uncaring doctors, lawyers who advocate for criminals, greedy bankers). Professor Schwartz does a good job of highlighting the recent issues in education with all the standards testing and tying it with the rest of the industries. He also does a fine job with the psychological examples and industry analysis but sometimes the dispassionate tone makes it hard to identify with how corrupting these industries can be for the people involved. (Where he does try to describe case studies himself, it feels like high school creative writing, it comes across best when he quotes from the people themselves.) In terms of a solution he doesn't really lay one out, but cites individual cases or companies where people are trying to work against or outside the system, instead of how we can change the global mindset, making this a weak call to arms. For the philosophers, be warned, in terms of the treatment of Aristotle, the treatment is cursory (maybe less than 20 pages in the whole book) where he states that we need to cultivate the virtues of courage, humanity and love, justice, temperance, transcendence and wisdom and knowledge, to frame and assess each situation on its own merits in order to have practical wisdom. It seems a little strange to restrict his analysis just to Aristotle, of the ancients he is not alone in advocating this, Confucius advocated seeking "ren" or humanity in each situation, as did many strains of Judaism. We also have alternative medicine practitioners trying to combat many of the ills that they see in the current healthcare system. Traditional martial arts systems also teach according to each student's strengths with mentoring of junior students by senior students in order to attain mastery. None of this is dealt with here. The final chapter of the book about finding happiness and a calling seems rushed and has been done better elsewhere and I would recommend Richard Sennet's "The Corrosion of Character" and "The Craftsman" or "Shopclass as Soul Craft" by Matthew B. Crawford. Again this is not to say that this is a bad book. If you are unfamiliar with the issues, then this is a good summary of the situation, the psychology experiment examples are very good and thought-provoking. But I just don't see this being one of those books which catch fire. It will be good as a paperback for a long flight.

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. One of my Top 5 books in 2011

By T. Pryor Practical wisdom. What is it? Is knowledge coupled with common sense. It sounds so logical but it is in short supply. We're drowning in data ... not knowledge ... and legislating away common sense. One of the most impacting stories, and example of the opposite of practical wisdom, in the book relates to my home state of Texas. For many reasons the educational growth of students in the Texas educational system is declining. Authors Barry Schwartz and Kenneth Sharpe explain some of the reasons. One reason is school administrators focus on the Texas Accountability System (TAC) test scores of each school. Because government officials put too much emphasis on the scores, the "You get what you measure" syndrome occurs. Teachers "teach to the test". Consultants hired to show teachers and principals how to improve TAC scores use a triage method of green, red and yellow. Teachers are told to classify students who will pass the test will little or no help as GREEN. Students who will most likely fail the test, even with lots of tutoring, are classified RED. Those few students who can pass the test with teaching and tutoring are labeled YELLOW. Yellow is where the teachers are told to spend the bulk of their time during the school year. If you have a GREEN or RED child, they will not get much attention. My daughter took our three grandsons out of a "good" Texas school district last year to home school them. Why? Because they are all GREEN and were bored to death with public education. Schwartz and Sharpe explain why there is a lack of practical wisdom in America's healthcare, legal and banking system. I hope lots of people read and apply the wisdom in this book.

A reasoned yet urgent call to embrace and protect the essential, practical human quality that has been drummed out of our lives: wisdom. It's in our nature to want to succeed. It's also human nature to want to do right. But we've lost how to balance the two. How do we get it back? Practical Wisdom can help. "Practical wisdom" is the essential human quality that combines the fruits of our individual experiences with our empathy and intellect-an aim that Aristotle identified millennia ago. It's learning "the right way to do the right thing in a particular circumstance, with a particular person, at a particular time." But we have forgotten how to do this. In Practical Wisdom, Barry Schwartz and Kenneth

Sharpe illuminate how to get back in touch with our wisdom: how to identify it, cultivate it, and enact it, and how to make ourselves healthier, wealthier, and wiser.