



The Roots of Goodness and Resistance to Evil

Inclusive Caring, Moral Courage, Altruism Born of Suffering, Active Bystandership, and Heroism

New York: Oxford University Press. 2015
Ervin Staub.

In *The Roots of Goodness and Resistance to Evil*, Ervin Staub draws on his extensive experiences in scholarship and intervention to illuminate the socializing experiences, education, and trainings that lead children and adults to become helpers/active bystanders and rescuers, acting to prevent violence and create peaceful and harmonious societies. The book collects Staub's most important and influential articles and essays in the field together with newly written chapters, with wide-ranging examples of helping behaviors as well as discussions of why we should help and not harm others. He addresses many examples of such behaviors, from helping people in everyday physical or psychological distress, to active bystandership in response to harmful actions by youth toward their peers (bullying), to endangering one's life to save someone in immediate danger, or rescuing intended victims of genocide.

Staub engages with ways to promote active bystandership in the service of preventing violence, helping people to heal from violence, and building caring societies. He explores the range of experiences that lead to active bystandership, including socialization by parents, teachers (and peers) in childhood, education, experiential learning, and public education through media. He examines what personal characteristics or dispositions result from such experiences, which in turn lead to caring and helping. Staub also considers how circumstances influence people--both individuals and whole groups--and how they join with personal dispositions to determine whether people remain passive in the face of others' need or instead help others and behave in morally courageous or even heroic ways. He considers how moral and caring values can be subverted by circumstances, and outlines ways to resist that possibility. He also considers how past victimization and the resulting psychological woundedness, which can lead to "defensive violence" or hostility toward people and the world, may be transformed by other experiences, leading to "altruism born of suffering." The book draws on research and theory as well as work in applied settings. Ultimately this book will help readers explore how we can turn ourselves into active, helpful people and what we need to do to create peaceful and caring societies.

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"In this excellent book, Ervin Staub writes from a lifetime of knowledge and experience, both personal and professional. He has never been a bystander. You will cherish his insight, and perhaps even more the goodness of his heart." -Richard Rhodes, historian and author of *Why They Kill* and *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award

"Ervin Staub has devoted his life--from his childhood Holocaust escape to his distinguished career--to resisting evil and pursuing goodness. This important volume recaps his career as the world's leading expert on evil and goodness, harm and helping, radicalization and reconciliation. His life and scholarship point the way to wider circles of 'moral inclusion,' to responding with moral courage, to raising children who become helpful and even heroic adults, and to empathy nurtured by suffering." -David G. Myers, Professor of Psychology, Hope College, and author of *Social Psychology*, 11th Edition

"This book is a compilation of the insights of a devoted scholar who has studied good and evil for approximately 45

years. Staub deals with some of the most important issues of our time: violence against outgroup members; altruism, moral courage, and reconciliation; and how and why a person is a perpetrator versus a helper. This book is an important resource for anyone interested in fostering compassion, helping behavior, and caring societies." -Nancy Eisenberg, President of the Association for Psychological Science; Regents' Professor of Psychology, Arizona State University; and author of *The Caring Child*

"*In The Roots of Goodness and Resistance to Evil*, Ervin Staub helps us understand how each of us can tap into our own compassion and moral courage. Drawing on many years of comprehensive research and work in real-world settings, and inspired by his own experience as a childhood survivor of the Holocaust, Staub has written a book with the unique power to illuminate the best of humanity in individuals and societies." -Arianna Huffington, chair, president, and editor-in-chief of the *Huffington Post* and author of *Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Life of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Wonder*

"Dr. Ervin Staub has delivered another gift of a book, this one on human goodness and the capacity to resist evil. A highly humanistic and hopeful book, it offers a counterbalance to human suffering and shows the capacity for caring and sustenance in the face of all forms of victimization. Dr. Staub has lived this experience personally as a child rescued from the Holocaust and as an adult in his research and field work around the globe. Highly recommended reading for professional and lay audiences alike." -Christine A. Courtois, PhD, ABPP, Psychologist, Independent Practice, Washington, DC National Clinical Trauma Consultant, Elements Behavioral Health/Promises, Malibu and Brightwater Landing, Wrightsville, PA, Author, *Healing the Incest Wound; Recollections of Sexual Abuse; Treatment of Complex Trauma; Spiritually-Oriented Treatment of Trauma*

"Ervin Staub combines his own remarkable life experience with the highest academic standards in diagnosing the root causes of evil, and reverse engineering that analysis to reveal the conditions that allow the flourishing of a compassionate and harmonious society. *The Roots of Goodness and Resistance to Evil* should be required reading in the social sciences -- and for anyone who cares about a civil society." -Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*