Most of us want to succeed. And most of us want to do the right thing. But we often forget that the way to succeed is by doing the right thing, as Barry Schwartz and Kenneth Sharpe remind us in *Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing*. When the institutions that shape our society – our schools, our banking and health care systems, and the other services we depend on day to day – need to change, the people in them typically rely on one of two tools: either make more rules or offer smarter incentives. But rules and incentives are not enough. There is a third way, a better way. And in this lively and provocative book, Schwartz and Sharpe explore the essential principle of problem solving that can transform our lives: practical wisdom.
Practical wisdom is a concept that Aristotle identified millennia ago and that new scientific research reveals is as crucial today as it was in ancient Greece. Practical wisdom is the essential human quality that combines the fruits of our individual experiences with our empathy and intellect. It’s how we learn to be a good friend or parent or doctor or soldier or citizen or statesman. It’s how we come to understand, as the authors write, “the right way to do the right thing in a particular circumstance, with a particular person, at a particular time.”

In *Practical Wisdom*, Schwartz and Sharpe explain the importance of wisdom in our daily lives and how to combat work situations that squeeze it out of our practices. They introduce us to what they call the “canny outlaws,” people with the wisdom to work around the calcified conventions of business as usual to achieve inspiring and satisfying results in the classroom, the courtroom, and the hospital, and in
daily life. And they identify System Changers, people who are building new, more rewarding, and ultimately more effective ways to work. The result is a book that helps us understand that wisdom is above all a practical idea – the surest route to a happier, more productive life and future.

What the world needs now is more people with practical wisdom and more institutions that allow them to display it. And this is the book to teach us how to identify and cultivate it.

BIOS

Barry Schwartz is the Dorwin Cartwright Professor of Social Theory and Social Action at Swarthmore College, specializing in psychology and economics. The author of the bestselling The Paradox of Choice, he is a frequent lecturer at business conferences around the world. He lives in Philadelphia.
Kenneth Sharpe is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Political Science at Swarthmore College, specializing in political philosophy, public policy, and U.S. foreign policy. He lives in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

“When Barry Schwartz presented this book's core idea to the TED audience, he earned one of the longest, most heartfelt standing ovations in TED's history. With so much of modern life being ground down by endless, soulless bureaucratic process, his call for a new wisdom centered on human values struck a powerful chord. I'm thrilled to see that talk turn into this irresistible book, one that every politician, CEO, parent, and citizen in America should read.” – Chris Anderson, curator of the TED conference
“What is at once the most significant and most neglected issue facing us as individuals and as a society? The answer is practical wisdom. If you’ve ever wondered how to balance courage with risk, patience with urgency, compassion with tough love, and rules with instincts, read this first-of-its-kind book. Interlacing revealing stories with reasoned analysis, Barry Schwartz and Kenneth Sharpe have written a pioneering work that is guaranteed to change your mind about the optimal ways to contribute to your communities, build better institutions, work, live, and love.” -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, and author of The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want

"Practical Wisdom reminded me that we all have the capacity for wisdom, no matter what our age or stature
in life. And, more important, it taught me that wisdom is the ultimate tool for us to flourish in this age of complication and clutter.” -- Chip Conley, founder of Joie de Vivre Hospitality and author of *Peak: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow*

“Using arguments both ancient and contemporary, in a voice both practical and prophetic, through evocative storytelling and discerning analysis, Barry Schwartz and Kenneth Sharpe excavate the layers and lessons of ‘practical wisdom,’ the quality of human character, moral purpose, and deft skill that is sorely missing from our rule-bound institutions, our incentivized work, and our most intimate relationships. This is a rare and rewarding book, framing a beautiful and provocative vision of a more meaningful and happier life. -- Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Emily Hargroves Fisher Professor of Education, Harvard University, and
author of *Respect*, *The Essential Conversation*, and *The Third Chapter*

“In our personal and professional lives, in our leaders and mentors, we need the blend of will plus skill to create practical wisdom that is effective, reliable, and readily accessible. In this must-read new treasure trove, Schwartz and Sharpe give us the recipe for integrating wisdom into our everyday lives as well as the infusion our institutions need to work honestly, accountably, and efficiently.” – Philip Zimbardo, professor, Stanford University, and author of *The Lucifer Effect* and *The Time Paradox*