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## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

# THE POWER OF IDEALS

## The Real Story of Moral Choice

by William Damon and Anne Colby

"Psychology presently studies superficial morality and deep morality. Superficial morality can be found in the quick, unreflective moral intuitions that we have. Deep morality is the reflective choices we make that involve honesty, faith, humility and ideals. Damon and Colby is the GO TO book for deep morality."

—**Martin Seligman**, Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology, [University of Pennsylvania](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~seligman/).

"Anne Colby and Bill Damon have written a very important, lucid, and intelligent book that represents a paradigm shift in our understanding of moral development. *The Power of Ideals* illuminates in fresh ways how a meaningful life develops...The appeal of this book should be to all who devote their lives to the moral, civic, spiritual or intellectual growth of young people." —

—**George E. Vaillant MD**, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Prominent recent scientific studies of morality, widely covered in the mass media, claim to show that human moral choice is driven either by base biological responses or by situational factors beyond an individual's control. These claims have led to a cynical and dispiriting cultural view of our moral potential. In this so-called "new science" view, people are seen as intrinsically selfish, hypocritical, and ruthless. Such an understanding of morality removes from the equation age-old concepts such as agency, conscience, virtue, and ideals. It seems to justify doing whatever it takes to get ahead, no matter how many others are trampled along the way.

William Damon and Anne Colby, two scholars at Stanford University and authors of many critically acclaimed books, present a more positive and hopeful view of moral choice in a new work, **THE POWER OF IDEALS: The Real Story of Moral Choice** (*Oxford University Press; May 1, 2015; \$29.95; Hardcover*). The book provides new findings about the power of the human moral sense, based on a more authentic method of research, and firmly counters the conclusions of the "new science" of moral psychology that has swept our culture.

In **THE POWER OF IDEALS**, Damon and Colby thoroughly examine the full range of available research and theory on moral choice, including their own previous groundbreaking studies. They present a comprehensive and compelling new theory that takes account of new science claims but also includes capacities that enable even ordinary people to act on noble ideals and make principled moral choices. Then, using their pioneering research method of “exemplar methodology,” Damon and Colby analyze the cases of six influential 20th century leaders whose lives demonstrated exceptional moral commitment. The six leaders are Jane Addams; Eleanor Roosevelt, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Abraham Heschel, Dag Hammarskjold, and Nelson Mandela. By examining the lives of these six people and the contributions they made, Damon and Colby bring to life their view that people at crucial times can and do make active, conscience-based choices that powerfully influence events in their lives and even the world beyond. Damon and Colby show how people develop this capacity by cultivating essential virtues such as truthfulness, humility, and faith in ideals beyond their own self-interest.

**THE POWER OF IDEALS** also makes clear that virtue, commitment and moral aspiration are not limited to powerful world leaders. Ordinary people have the capacity to grow morally, realizing their potential for lives of generosity, integrity, meaning, and genuine human connection. This book provides an unparalleled source that educators, families, and institutional leaders can use to support the development of a more positive morality, that vast realm of social actions, intentions, emotions, judgments aimed at providing benefits (and preventing damage) to people, society, and the world beyond the self.”

**THE POWER OF IDEALS** is the most important and hopeful look at contemporary moral psychology on the scene today. It provides a needed push back against the cynicism and passivity that threaten our contemporary world.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Claire McKinney at [claire@clairemckinneypr.com](mailto:claire@clairemckinneypr.com) or 908-955-7563.

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