Introduction: Good-ish People

> The three hardest tasks in the world are neither physical feats nor intellectual achievements, but moral acts: to return love for hate, to include the excluded, and to say, "I was wrong."
>
> —SYDNEY J. HARRIS

On Sunday, June 12, 2016, Rachel Hurnyak woke in her Bay Area home to horrific overnight news from Orlando, Florida. As bartenders at a popular gay nightclub shouted "Last call," a man had walked in with multiple firearms. He killed forty-nine people and injured fifty-three others.

Rachel was shocked, and as someone who self-identifies as queer, she was terrified. She knew it could have been her—or anyone in her community. Rachel was once my student, and when I heard the news, I had the same thought.

As Rachel thought about going into work the next day at a Bay Area technology company, she knew her stress level was dangerously high. It was not the good kind of stress that makes employees more focused, motivated, and creative. She was grieving. The Grief Index study captures data from more than twenty-five thousand people collected over several decades. The study reports that, at any given moment, approximately one in four American workers is experiencing grief.

Rachel was feeling "hidden grief," which specialists say emerges from negative events and relationships outside of work, such as family deaths or illnesses or national tragedies. Hidden grief costs U.S. companies as much as $75.1 billion in lost productivity per

year due to employees who have difficulty concentrating, make errors in judgment, and experience accidents. Sometimes, the source of the hidden grief, such as the death of a family member, is relatively straightforward and easy to share, but hidden grief can also be more complex and difficult to share with others.

Unable to sleep that night, Rachel decided to make her hidden grief visible to the world. She blogged, "This week and beyond will be difficult for your LGBTQ and/or Muslim colleagues . . . one community grieves because our members were killed in one of the first safe places we ever knew. The second community grieves because they're being blamed for those killings."

Much as she loved her job and her colleagues, Rachel was dreading being at work the next morning. It was just going to make things harder, even though work colleagues are a critical component of many people's support systems. In Rachel's case, most of her straight colleagues were good, well-intentioned people who would seek to comfort her. They might call themselves allies.

I imagined myself as one of those colleagues reaching out to Rachel that Monday morning, filled with sympathy and outrage, overflowing with good intentions. We might mention our donations to The Trevor Project or the Human Rights Campaign. We might fill her in on the minutiae of each breaking news story about the shooter. We might tell her about a gay family member or college friend or former colleague. We might recall Matthew Shepard, or Tyler Clementi, or another victim of a terrible hate crime. Our eyes would well with tears.

Yet, instead of finding comfort in such good intentions, Rachel was filled with dread. This surprised me. She is one of the most appreciative people I know, the type who makes you feel heroic for the smallest of kind acts. Clearly, I was missing something.

"What they are saying is more for them than me," Rachel says.

"You go to a lot of funerals when you're a pastor's kid and you hear the same conversations every time. It is almost a competition to see who was the most relevant. 'Well, I saw Jim on Tuesday at the store and he looked okay.' Or, 'I saw him the following morning and he didn't look okay.' Meanwhile, Jim's family is sitting alone in the corner. We make it about ourselves."

Rachel feared that she would need to set aside her grief to make room for her colleagues' emotions. Their grief—my grief—would be genuine. Her colleagues and I cared about her well-being *and* we wanted something as well: We had an urgent desire for her to see *our* grief. We saw ourselves as the good ones, as believers on the right side of history. We needed her to validate us. At some unconscious level, we craved affirmation that we were good people, and that she knew it.

Claiming an Identity

In speech and action, we express how we see ourselves and how we want to be perceived by others, a process that organizational scholars Caroline Bartel and Jane Dutton call "identity claiming." Psychologically, identity claiming is an ordinary and universal process. Each of us claims multiple identities. My husband, my children, and I all claim an identity as Indian Americans. My daughters also claim identities as Mets fans and as girls-but-not-girly-girls. My husband claims identities as a physician, a Punjabi Sikh, and a devoted dad. I claim identities as a woman of color, a do-gooder, and a loving mom.

Each of us has an intense craving for others to see and acknowledge our various identities, a phenomenon that Bartel and Dutton call "identity granting." They compare the interplay between identity claiming and granting to a public performance and

audience reaction. Tina Fey may claim an identity as a funny person, but if audiences don't find her funny, her identity as a funny person has not been granted.

We are vigilant for clues about whether our identity has been granted. Psychologist William Swann has studied how much we care about this affirmation of ourselves, including one study in which participants were even willing to pay for affirmation. How people treat us and what they say to us affirms us.

When we are unsure of whether an important identity has been granted by others, our craving for affirmation becomes more intense and urgent. Psychologists call this a moment of self-threat—our identity is being challenged or dismissed. Just as moments of physical threat trigger a hyperfocus on self-preservation, moments of psychological self-threat do the same. If I value being seen as a do-gooder, then I feel self-threat when people judge me as a greedy person, based on stereotypes of my résumé. If I value being seen as a loving mom, then I feel self-threat when other mothers judge me for working full-time outside the home. Once I am in self-threat mode, other problems follow.

Along with organizational scholars Mary Kern, Zhu Zhu, and Sujin Lee, I studied what happens when we construe an external situation as a threat. We asked participants to do a word scramble task and told them we would pay them based on their performance. We also measured whether they saw the task as more of a threat or more of a challenge, which potentially suggests a self-threat. Our prediction was that people who saw the task as a threat would be more likely to morally disengage or turn off their conscience, which keeps us from doing unethical things. As predicted, participants were more likely to morally disengage when they (believed they) faced a threat.

Then we used a simple intervention to bring this threat down. We asked participants to remember a situation in which they felt secure, able to depend on someone and have that person depend on them. Even though this intervention had nothing to do with the threat of the word scramble task, we suspected that it would be affirming and reduce the threat that people felt in the situation. The affirmation made them less likely to morally disengage after the self-threat, as we predicted.

Threat, especially self-threat, is stressful. Threat-motivated stress can lead to bad performance, negative health consequences, and poor behavioral choices. We do not feel good and we usually do not treat others well. We become defensive. Our hopes of being a good person are diminished at times like these.

In summary, we each have identities we claim. We look to others to grant those identities. When we don't get that affirmation, we feel threatened, which is stressful, and we do things we would not normally do. Under self-threat, we become less of the good people we mean to be.

Research reveals how our need for affirmation overrides our genuine desire to be a good colleague, friend, and ally. One study found that we value boosts to our self-esteem, such as compliments, even more than our favorite sex acts and foods. Given that it is socially taboo to openly covet compliments, these study participants probably underreported how much they value that affirmation.

We all fall into this pattern. We fish for affirmation. We center our needs, nudging away the needs of others. We seek what activists call "cookies," acknowledgments of our good intentions, even when the impact is costly to the cookie giver. We especially crave that affirmation when faced with a situation that challenges the believer identity we are claiming. The affirmation relieves the self-threat, but ironically, we end up acting less like—not more like—the people we mean to be. The pattern is both heartbreaking and exhausting.

Believers were the people most likely to be Rachel's allies. We were also the people most likely to leave her hanging emotionally. When she needed us most, we were inclined to hit her up for cookies of affirmation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes of the dangers of cookies in her novel *Americanah*. The protagonist leads several diversity workshops until she realizes that the workshop attendees' primary motivation is not to learn but to feel better about themselves. Craving cookies, they sacrifice the opportunity for meaningful change.

The cookie craving intensifies when self-threat hits, as with the tragic events in Orlando. Many of us want to support Rachel and others who are marginalized. Yet we come up short. We want to do better by Rachel, but we might be unsure about how to do so. We might feel as if we are damned if we say something and damned if we don't. Many of us believe in the promise of equality and equity, diversity and inclusion, but do not know how to build those beliefs into reality.

Rachel will return toward the end of the book to describe where she found the support she needed. First, we're going to learn the four ways in which builders are different than believers. Let's begin by exploring how good people like you and me think.

The Psychology of Good People

I study the psychology of good people. I see myself as a good person and yet my behavior is filled with evidence to the contrary. I cling to antiquated gender stereotypes. I defend systems that favor well-off, well-connected families like mine. I misidentify people of the same race. I let homophobic jokes slide. I am judgmental of people whose gender identities confuse me. None of this makes me proud.

At the same time, I fight for equality, donate money to social justice causes, spend time supporting individuals from marginalized groups, and challenge the status quo. So my mind flips between a belief that I am as good as they come and a belief that I am no good at all. In the end, the belief that I am a good person always wins.

I am not alone. Most of us have what psychologists Karl Aquino and Americus Reed call a central "moral identity." Moral identity is a measure of whether I care about being a good person, *not* whether I am a good person. Their research reveals that most of us want to feel like good people. This is an identity we claim and want granted.

Now, just because many of us have a highly central moral identity does not mean that we agree on what is and is not moral. In fact, moral identity does not appear to be unique to any particular political affiliation, generation, gender, or belief system. While you and I may disagree on what is and is not moral, we both would bristle at any accusation that we lack morality. Even people who are engaging in crimes or bullying that others view as immoral may still see themselves as moral. A recent *Washington Post* story offered an in-depth profile of former white nationalist Derek Black, revealing that even KKK affiliates do not necessarily self-identify as racists.

While none of us are good all the time, and some of us are far from good a lot of the time, we still see ourselves as good. How do we sustain this view of ourselves? We hold a faulty assumption that our behavior pivots around our ethical standards and our moral values. That is not how our minds actually work. Our behavior pivots around our identity. I want to see myself as a good person, which I can accomplish by being a good person (doing X) or by convincing myself that I'm a good person (while doing the opposite of X). Even when we fall short, our reflex is to claim an identity as a good person. Evidence to the contrary is a self-threat.

It is difficult to overstate just how quickly and seamlessly we deal with self-threats. Our bodies are built to fight off bacteria and our minds are built to fight off self-threat. This does not make us bad

people, but it does make us unlikely to recognize when we do bad things. The result is that all of us, even the "good people," do bad things. It is easy for us to see this in other people and much harder for us to see it in ourselves. Through it all, we cling to an illusion of being a perfectly ethical and unbiased person and to the idea that such a "good person" can exist. This illusion is problematic.

As a result, good people are prone to what my mentors—business school professor Max Bazerman and psychology professor Mahzarin Banaji—and I call "bounded ethicality." Bounded ethicality is the psychology of "good-ish" people. Good-ish people are sometimes good and sometimes not, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not, like all of us. This model of bounded ethicality challenges ways of thinking and talking in which you are either a good person or not, a racist or not, an unethical human or not. We argue that this binary notion is seductive but misleading and scientifically inaccurate.

We do not need to fall for this false notion. Rather, we can embrace being good-ish, which is a good person who is always striving to be a better person, a true work-in-progress. To do that, we need to let go of the idea of being a good person in order to become a better person. Good-ish people are always growing, which is why being good-ish is better than being good. Being good-ish sets a higher ethical standard for ourselves, because when we are good-ish, we are learning.

To that end, Mary Kern and I expanded on the model of bounded ethicality and have developed a model of "ethical learning" which takes the psychology of good-ish people into account. We redefine what it means to be a good person as someone who is trying to be better, as opposed to someone who is allowing themselves to believe in the illusion that they are always a good person.

Remember our need to be affirmed by Rachel? That is a good example of our need to be good people getting in the way of us becoming better people. We care a lot about our good-person

identity; we erroneously see this identity as either/or; we want the identity to be granted by Rachel; and we especially need that affirmation under self-threat. This way of thinking is very human and very costly to the people we care about supporting. It is possible to break free of this psychology. We see what that looks like next.

"I Didn't Want to Offend Her"

"It was so embarrassing," recalls author Sarah Weeks. Sarah had no idea how to say her student's last name: Gita Varadarajan. Sarah was Gita's instructor at Columbia University's Teachers College; Gita was an experienced educator enrolled in the Reading and Writing Project, working on her own writing to help her elementary-school students work on theirs. Sarah was thrilled when she had students like Gita who fell outside of the white, American-born norm in her classroom. Still, as a self-described "white girl from the Midwest," she did not want to "offend" Gita—a recent immigrant from India—by shredding the pronunciation of her last name.

Sarah understood that knowing and using someone's name was critical to building meaningful relationships. Dale Carnegie, author of the classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, once said, "A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language." A Google search for "how to remember people's names" yields almost three million hits. But this was an issue of pronunciation, not memory. So Sarah simply called Gita by her first name and avoided the problem.

After the course ended, Sarah encouraged Gita to expand a story she had written into a book, which they decided to write together. Sarah has published more than fifty-five children's books, including *So B. It* and *Pie*, which has sold more than three million copies.

Gita is an experienced teacher and a first-time author with a fresh voice. As collaborators, Sarah often introduced Gita to people in her publishing network. Still, Sarah avoided saying Gita's last name.

As Sarah and Gita developed the story, they focused on how Gita had written about twelve-year-old Ravi Suryanarayanan,* a middle-school boy whose family moves from Bangalore to New Jersey. Ravi was frustrated that none of the teachers and students in his new school had tried to say his name. Sarah had privately winced when she read Gita's draft, seeing herself in the fictional teachers. Sarah asked Gita about the characters' motivations, specifically why no one tried to learn how to say Ravi's name. Gita's analysis was immediate and unflinching. "Arrogance," she said. "I don't think they care."

Sarah was stunned. Arrogance? While they were discussing fictional characters, Sarah's self-threat meter went into the red zone. This was not the identity Sarah intended to claim or the identity she thought Gita had granted her. Sarah confessed. The issue was not that she cared too little but that she cared too much to risk embarrassment or offending someone else.

Like so many of us in an uncomfortable situation, Sarah's good intentions weren't enough and the impact was clear. Gita did not grant Sarah her desired identity or the affirmation she craved. Sarah had no idea how Gita perceived the intentions and beliefs of people like her, and the impact of those perceptions.

That's when Sarah moved from believing to building. She asked Gita if she would teach her the correct pronunciation of both Varadarajan (Gita's surname) and Suryanarayanan (the main character's surname, and also Gita's maiden name). Gita readily agreed. Sarah realized that when a native speaker said the name quickly, she needed help hearing each distinct syllable. She asked

* Sarah and Gita experimented with the main character's first name. Earlier drafts referred to Ravi as Suraj.

Gita to say it more slowly. Again, Gita agreed as she saw Sarah was willing to put in the work.

Sarah wrote out the names phonetically. She practiced saying them. Once she stopped worrying about self-threat, she was surprised to realize that the names were not that hard to say semi-correctly, albeit in an American accent. (She's right. If you can say "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" or the names on *Game of Thrones* or Arnold Schwarzenegger, you can probably say "vuh-ruh-dhar-AH-jhun" and "sur-ee-ah-neh-RI-ya-nan.") She just had not tried before.

A week later, Sarah called Gita. When Gita answered, Sarah asked, "May I speak with Gita Suryanarayanan Varadarajan?" Gita cried. It was the first time anyone had tried to say her name since she had moved to America several years before. "The *first time*," Gita emphasizes.

Higher Standards

No one would have confused Sarah's pronunciation with that of a native speaker. Her American accent did not disappear. But one need not have Meryl Streep's capacity for accents to do a vague approximation of native pronunciation. Maybe we cannot roll our *r*'s, but we can strive to put the emphasis on the correct syllable and leave the correct letters silent. In pronunciation, perfection need not be the enemy of progress.

I have been slow to learn this lesson. Like Sarah, when a name looked "hard" on paper, I did not say it aloud. Even worse, I just blew by it in my mind, not even fully reading it. My standards for effort were selectively low. My family is from northern India and I have lived in the United States since I was six months old. "Normal" Indian names to me are the ones I grew up hearing, like Raj,

Gupta, Singh, or my own, Chugh.* I had never learned or tried to say longer, south Indian names. I admit it: Through the process of being interviewed, Sarah taught this brown woman how to say Varadarajan.

Sarah's efforts were meaningful to Gita, but Sarah was also redefining the norm for herself. Names with one or two syllables that "sound white" may seem normal to some Americans. Some people may regard other types of names as "hard to say" or reasons to ask "can I call you Sue?" or even to assign a nickname to the person, without permission ("We'll just call you Sue"). What are we saying about who belongs and who does not if we treat white-sounding names as the norm and other names as the variants? After all, these names are not the norm for many Americans, most non-Americans, or the original Native Americans.

Sarah's identity as someone who believes in diversity survived, not despite her confession, but *because* of it. Her shift from believer to builder started with educating herself. She asked for help, without demanding or presuming it from Gita, who might have not wanted to go down this road. None of us should be obligated to educate others. In this case, Gita wanted to help Sarah learn. Their conversation grew from there.

Gita suggested they tell each other the worst stereotypes their respective cultures held about the other. They decided to write their thoughts down on an index card and then exchange cards. Gita's list included "Divorced. Obsessed with meat. Feeds kids out of cans." Sarah's list read something like "Pushy. Dominated by men. Obsessed with education."

They asked each other awkward questions. They talked about models of good parenting in each of their cultures, noticing similarities and differences. They compared what was "normal" versus "weird" in their worlds.

* Pronounced with a *u* that sounds like the *oo* in "good" and a hard *gh* at the end.

Notably, they had different experiences of these candid exchanges. Sarah still cringes when remembering her awkward entry into these conversations, while Gita remembers far less discomfort. In fact, she remembers the pleasure she felt that somebody wanted to know and understand her. Sarah was processing her self-threat while Gita was feeling seen and heard.

As Sarah built her capacity and Gita supported her growth, their collaboration grew deeper and richer. The best evidence lies in the book they cowrote, *Save Me a Seat*, a widely acclaimed book filled with humor and humanity. It features two middle-school students named Joe and Ravi. Joe and Ravi are quick to stereotype each other but also share a common enemy, the class bully. The book has resonated with reviewers, parents, teachers, and kids—and Rhode Island adopted the book as a statewide read.

Both Sarah and Gita cite the name pronunciation conversation as the gateway to the book. From there, they both reflected on what they assumed to be "normal." They took chances and trusted each other with their mistakes. There were more questions than statements. There were, and still are, awkward moments. To their mutual delight, the awkward moments unlocked something powerful. When I independently asked each of them to capture their conversations in one word, I was surprised that Gita said "laughter" and Sarah said "fun."

The story of Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan highlights our missed opportunities at an individual-to-individual level. Throughout this book, we will see examples of how people grapple with the relationships in their work, personal, and community lives. Their story suggests what else might be possible if we can engage in those relationships as builders. We will also see

examples of how individuals grapple within social systems—the cultures, laws, institutions, and traditions of our lives.

"I'm Not That White Person"

Lorri Perkins is that empathetic friend who celebrates your promotion as if it were her own. She cries when your dog dies. She can't wait to hear about your big date. She can relate to people from seemingly every background, which I have seen her do for the twenty years of our friendship.

As an organizational facilitator and consultant, Lorri had led workshops for a corporate client on topics like goal setting, problem solving, and communications. When the client hired a diversity consultant, he asked Lorri to work with the new consultant to ensure that the new workshops were aligned with Lorri's previous work.

These new workshops covered topics new to Lorri, who is white, like systemic racism and white privilege. "I was now part of a conversation that most of my suburban white friends were not," Lorri recalls about her experience sitting in the workshops. "It was uncomfortable. It created a lot of self-reflection. I felt myself wanting to explain that I'm not that white person you're describing."

To her, the session with the diversity consultant felt divisive and counterproductive. "I wanted to explain how I grew up. My parents did not have college degrees. That's not privilege the way I, and so many others, define it." Faced with self-threat, Lorri was tempted to shut down and tune out and defend herself as a "good person."

Lorri decided to speak to a trusted black friend from church, though they had never talked about these topics before. She was

surprised to learn that the bucolic roads she loved were the same ones her friend's family avoided at night, fearing interactions with the police. Lorri had heard about these issues on the news but had never considered them as a possibility in her town. She wondered what else she did not know about her friend's experiences and perspective.

"I don't even think of myself as white," Lorri says, a sentiment expressed by many white people. Now she was realizing that if being black meant having a race, so did being white. She began listening more to conversations about systemic bias, trying to understand what the term meant. Filled with questions but unsure with whom she could discuss these issues, she contacted me. Despite our long friendship, we had never discussed race or gender or any of the social issues I am writing about in this book.

At first, I resisted. While Lorri was a believer, I was one of her few close friends of color. It is hard to explain things that are visible to you and invisible to others, which is how systemic bias works. In my life, I felt like I was already doing this exhausting explaining work with a lot of people, more than any one of them realized. The national climate felt very hostile to me, and I needed my emotional energies to focus on my family, not on educating others who did not feel targeted. I told Lorri this and gave her books to read and people to follow on social media.

After she did her homework, she came back to me, and this time, I agreed to talk. A swirl of events had brought Lorri to think differently about the world: the 2016 presidential campaign, videos of police officers killing unarmed black people, the conversation with her friend at church, challenging questions from her children, and the diversity workshop. "I'm just starting to realize that the people that I'm sitting side by side with at church, at work, at my kids' school are dealing with problems that I had assumed just don't apply to them," Lorri says.

"I am one of those people that had to work hard to understand this word 'privilege,' to get past this word," Lorri recalls. "I had to reframe what that word means. I realized that even though I did not have a red carpet laid out for me, a black person walking that same path of nonprivilege would certainly have less opportunity or less going their way, less wind at their back than a white person on that same path." Lorri kept reading and listening more.

"I'm not an activist," she says. "But I am thinking about what are the subtle but consistent things I can do to not turn my back. It can be overwhelming. Sometimes I get lazy. What's my role?" That question has been asked by many people who do not identify as people engaged in social justice or social movements.

Even for those people, research tells us that small steps are critical to longer-term and larger progress. The narrative of big, bold action in social change is largely mythical. Contrary to the mythology about her, Rosa Parks had engaged in many small acts of resistance before that famous day on the bus, as detailed in Jeanne Theoharis's biography *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*.

I turned the question back to Lorri. How might she engage? She thought for a moment. "I think my role is to initiate as many conversations as I can with those who are open and willing to having the conversations. I can break the silence. I can pop the bubble a bit." In her roles as a consultant, as a parent, as a church member, as a family member, and as a neighbor, the opportunities for conversation—the opportunity to create light—were everywhere. She could learn about the experiences of people with different backgrounds than hers and prompt thought in people with similar backgrounds to hers. Lorri could engage herself and others to see the systems they are all part of. As we will explore, her privilege, ordinary as it is, gives her a natural role.

What to Expect

This book is for and about people of all races, ethnicities, genders, religions, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations, good people who believe in building a better workplace and world. As we move from thinking about being a good person to being a good-ish person trying to be better, we can expect certain emotional reactions. Good people like us are especially prone to feelings of shame. Shame is a tricky emotion. If and when shame strikes while you are reading, do not feel ashamed of the shame. Instead, I encourage you to consider the difference between shame and guilt. When we feel shame, we feel as if "I am wrong"; it is a high-self-threat emotion, which we want to make go away by blaming others or shutting down. When we feel guilt, we feel as if "I did something wrong"; it is less about the self and more about the behavior.

Shame is paralyzing. If we do act when we feel shame, whatever we do usually makes things worse, not better. In contrast, guilt is motivating. When we feel guilt, we are more likely to make positive changes in our behavior and to engage in interpersonal problem solving. As shame researcher, author, and popular TED Talk speaker Brené Brown says, "I'm pro-guilt. Guilt is good. Guilt helps us stay on track because it's about our behavior." If you are a believer who is trying to be a builder, shame gets in the way. We have too much hard work to do.

I encourage you to begin that hard work with the approach you take in reading this book. Let yourself feel both inspiration and unease. Toggle between feeling misunderstood and trying to understand. Balance the impulse to judge others with my invitation to reflect on yourself. If you can fight through the ugliness of shame, you will have the emotional openness you need to manage these contradictions.

Most important, consider the possibility that the thoughts and feelings that arise for you while reading this book are the same ones that arise for you when confronting these issues in the real world. Pay attention to the reactions you have while reading (maybe even jot some of them down). Consider that these may be the same reactions you have to issues of diversity and inclusion in other parts of your life. Do you feel offended and misunderstood when I mention the group you belong to? Consider how members of other groups feel when their groups are discussed. Do you want to stop reading, especially when we talk about bias in good people? Stay with the issues, even when things get uncomfortable. Do you wait to be educated by others rather than educating yourself? Take responsibility for looking up unfamiliar ideas or names you may encounter in this book. Do you question the realism of the real-world examples in the book? Consider that the status quo is being challenged. Do you have the urge to give this book to other people in your life, rather than read it yourself, because you think they need it more than you? Consider that you may be missing opportunities to be more of the person you mean to be. All of us have some of these reactions (including me, while writing this book). Notice which ones you have.

When you have the reactions above, the tools in the book are ready for you to use them. You do not—in fact, should not—wait until you are done reading the book to begin applying them. Practice in your own mind and heart while reading so that you will be better able to do so out in the world.

And when you are out in the world, you can expect to use these tools in many parts of your life. I hope this book helps you to talk effectively about LGBTQ rights at holiday gatherings or address a racist joke at work. I hope it helps you respond to a coworker who calls you sexist or figure out what to say to your immigrant neighbor about news of hate crimes. I hope it helps you to think

about what you can do to make your next meeting a more inclusive one or decide what you think of protests and protesters.

I also hope to surprise you with research that reveals the selfishness of the urge to "save" people in need, the inefficacy of sympathy and "white tears," and what people may be thinking when you say you do not see color. Our intentions and our impact are not always the same, and research can help us fine-tune the assumptions we make about ourselves and others.

In the chapters that follow, science will guide us and stories will bring the science to life. We will unpack the work believers need to do to become builders in four phases:

1. ACTIVATING A GROWTH MINDSET of being a good-ish work-in-progress, not a premade good person;
2. SEEING THE ORDINARY PRIVILEGE we hold and putting it to good use on behalf of others;
3. OPTING FOR WILLFUL AWARENESS, though our minds and lives make willful ignorance more likely; and
4. ENGAGING the people and systems around us.

We begin by exploring the mindset that liberated Sarah and Gita to deepen their collaboration and liberated Lorri to see more clearly the people and systems in her life. It is a mindset in which the less we worry about being good people, the better people we will be.