

The C.O.M.P.A.S.S. Practice

Maintaining a moral compass requires more than good intentions. It requires habits of moral attention. Use the **C.O.M.P.A.S.S. Practice** when you are trying to make a difficult decision, respond to pressure, or return to the person you want to become.

C — Clarify Your Core Values

Choose the values you want to be known by. Not abstractly, but behaviorally.

Instead of saying, “I value kindness,” ask:

- ✓ *What does kindness require right now when I am angry?*

Instead of saying, “I value courage,” ask:

- ✓ *What truth am I avoiding?*
- ✓ *Am I mistaking bravado for bravery?*

Instead of saying, “I value integrity,” ask:

- ✓ *Where do my words and actions need to come into better alignment?*
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O — Observe Your Pressures

Notice what pulls you away from your values. Approval. Fear. Fatigue. Resentment. Money. Status. Conflict. Loneliness. Group belonging. Social media. The desire to be right. The desire to be liked. The desire to win. We cannot resist pressures we refuse to name.

Ask:

- ✓ *What is pulling me off course right now?*
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M — Measure Choices Against Principles

Before acting, pause long enough to measure the choice against your deeper commitments.

Ask:

- ✓ *Does this align with who I say I am? Who I aspire to be?*
 - ✓ *Would I respect this choice later?*
 - ✓ *Would I be comfortable if someone I love knew the full truth of this?*
 - ✓ *Is this a choice I would admire if I witnessed it?*
 - ✓ *Am I choosing what is right, or only what is useful?*
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P — Pause Before Reacting

A moral compass works best when we slow down enough to read it and the direction to which it points. The pause is where conscience becomes audible.

Before responding to provocation, conflict, gossip, criticism, or fear, ask:

- ✓ *What response would reflect my character rather than my impulse?*

The pause does not weaken us. It strengthens our ability to choose.

A — Accept Accountability

Integrity requires correction. We need people who can tell us the truth without being punished for it. We need the humility to listen when our behavior does not match our intentions. We need the courage to repair when we have caused harm. Defensiveness is one of the great enemies of character.

Ask:

- ✓ *Who has permission to help me stay honest with myself?*
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S — Stand When It Costs Something

Principles are proven under pressure. It is easy to value honesty when honesty is rewarded. It is easy to value courage when the crowd applauds. It is easy to value compassion when compassion costs nothing. The test comes when truth is inconvenient, kindness is misunderstood, courage is lonely, and principle requires sacrifice. Ask:

- ✓ *What value am I willing to protect even when it costs me comfort, approval, or advantage?*
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S — Seek Repair and Renewal

No one lives perfectly. Character is not never falling short. Character is returning to the path, making repair, and recommitting to the person we are trying to become. Ask:

- ✓ *Where do I need to repair a gap between my stated values and my behavior?*
 - ✓ *What next right action would help me begin again?*
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Defining the Traits We Want to Live By

One way to maintain a moral compass is to name the traits we want to be remembered for. Not merely achievements. Not titles. Not possessions. Not how impressive we seemed. What traits align most with you or who you aspire to become?

- Truthfulness.
- Courage.
- Kindness.
- Fairness.
- Humility.
- Steadfastness.
- Generosity.
- Wisdom.
- Reliability.
- Mercy.

- Discernment.
- Patience.
- Loyalty with conscience.
- Strength with compassion.
- Grace with boundaries.

Then we can ask:

- ✓ *What does this trait look like in daily behavior?*
- ✓ *What does this trait look like under pressure?*
- ✓ *What threatens this trait in me?*
- ✓ *Who helps me remember this trait?*
- ✓ *What would I regret if I abandoned this trait?*
- ✓ *What would people closest to me say I actually practice?*

This moves character from aspiration to self-examination.

A Practice for the Week: The Legacy Traits Reflection

Choose five traits you would want remembered by those who matter most.

For each trait, complete these sentences:

1. *I want to be remembered as someone who practiced _____.*
2. *This trait matters because _____.*
3. *When I am under pressure, this trait is threatened by _____.*
4. *One small way I can practice this trait this week is _____.*
5. *Someone who helps me remember this trait is _____.*

At the end of the week, ask:

- ✓ *Where did I live close to my values?*
- ✓ *Where did I drift?*
- ✓ *Where did I choose image over integrity?*
- ✓ *Where did I choose character over convenience?*
- ✓ *What needs repair?*
- ✓ *What deserves gratitude?*
- ✓ *What do I want to carry forward?*

Key Takeaways

Integrity is alignment between our inner values and outward actions.

Standing on principle means remaining anchored to what is honorable, even when pressure or convenience pulls us elsewhere.

A moral compass is our inner orientation toward what is true, humane, just, and life-affirming.

Character is values made visible over time.

Image is managed; character is practiced.

A noisy world can blur moral attention, making gossip feel like accountability, outrage feel like courage, and performance feel like principle.

Maintaining a moral compass requires reflection, accountability, pause, courage, and repair.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is to keep returning to the person we claim to be.

Reflection Questions for Community Conversation

- What does integrity mean to you?*
 - Who taught you about character, either by example or by contrast?*
 - What traits do you most admire in others?*
 - What do you want to be remembered for by those who matter most?*
 - Where do you feel most pressured to act against your values?*
 - What is the difference between standing on principle and simply being stubborn?*
 - How do we know when loyalty becomes complicity?*
 - How can families, workplaces, and communities help people practice character rather than merely perform image?*
 - What does your moral compass need from you right now?*
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