

# ★ THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ★ BLUE CHIPS

MORAL COMPROMISE, INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE,  
AND THE GRADUAL CORRUPTION OF INTEGRITY

## ★ DISCUSSION GUIDE ★

“

Integrity is rarely lost in a single dramatic choice. It is worn down in small steps, each compromise making the next one easier.”

— WILLIAM FRIEDKIN



### 1 THE EROSION OF INTEGRITY



How does Coach Bell's compromise happen gradually rather than all at once?

What small steps lead to big changes in his behavior?

2

### THE POWER OF THE SITUATION



What pressures does Coach Bell face from the institution, others, and himself?

How do these pressures work together to overwhelm his resistance?

3

### INSTITUTIONAL CORRUPTION



How does the system reward winning over integrity?

What role do boosters, administrators, and silence play?

4

### EXCUSES WE TELL OURSELVES



What justifications does Bell use for his compromises?

What excuses might we use when we compromise our own values?

5

### THE COST OF COMPROMISE



How does the compromise affect Bell's relationships, self-respect, and peace of mind?

What does he ultimately have to sacrifice?

6

### MORAL RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE



Coach Bell chooses to come clean, even when it costs him everything.

What does this teach us about responsibility and moral courage?



### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

#### MORAL PRESSURE MAP

In groups, list situations where people face pressure to compromise their values (e.g., school, sports, work, friends, family). For each, identify:

- The pressure source(s)
- The small first step of compromise
- The potential long-term cost

*"Awareness is the first step toward resisting corruption."*



### KEY TAKEAWAYS



Integrity is tested under pressure—and can erode in small steps.



Situational forces are powerful; humility helps us stay vigilant.



Institutions can normalize corruption when winning is valued above all.



Excuses make compromise feel acceptable.



Taking responsibility, even at great cost, is the path to moral recovery.



### PERSONAL REFLECTION

★ Where in my life do I feel pressure to compromise my values?

★ What "small step" might be the beginning of a bigger compromise?

★ What helps me stay aligned with my values when it's hard?

★ What would moral courage look like in one situation right now?



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