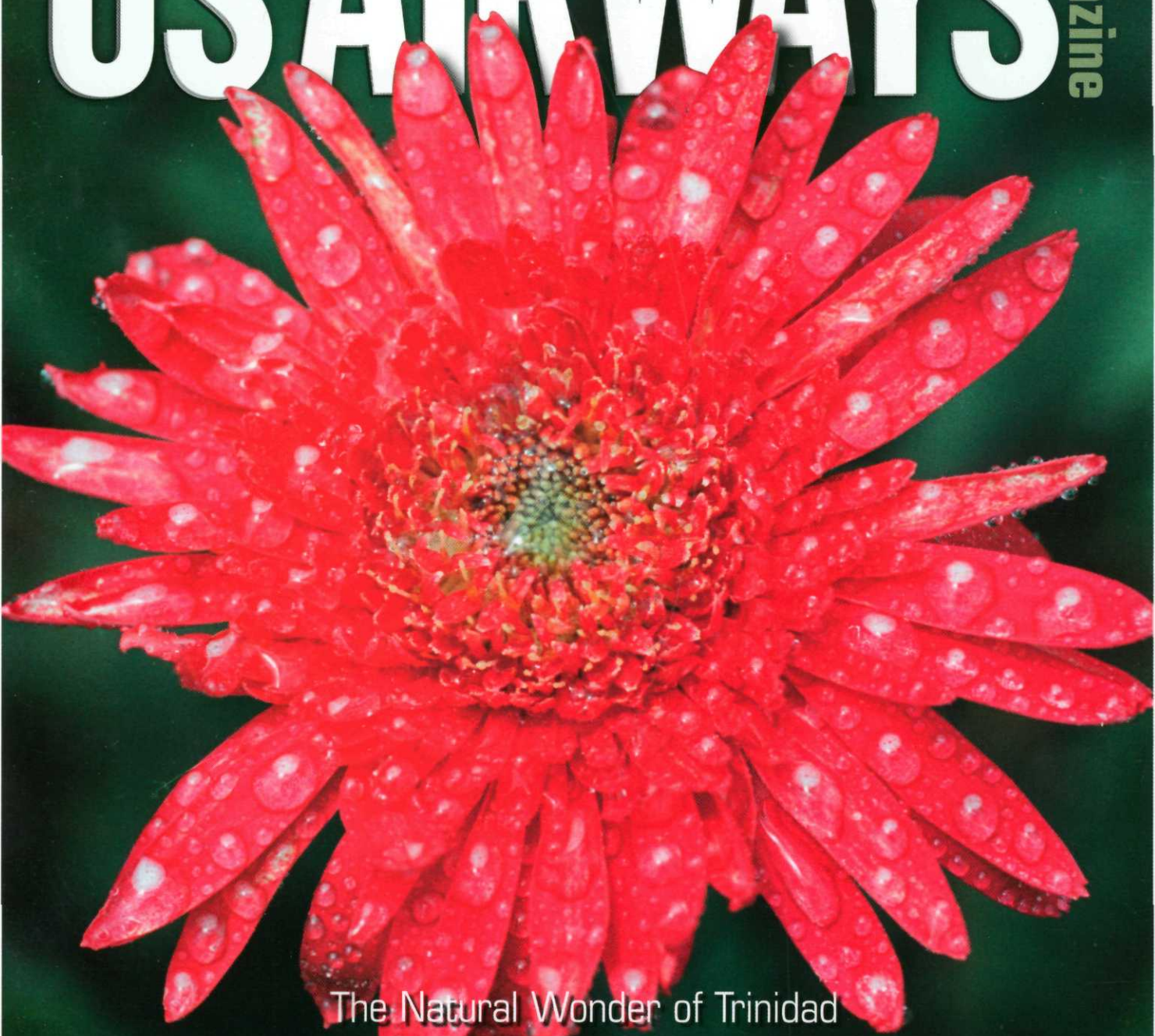


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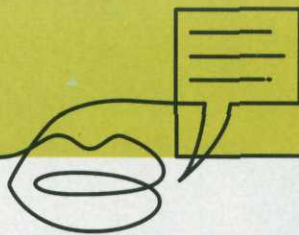
The Natural Wonder of Trinidad

## AN ISLAND IN BLOOM

On the Road with The Da Vinci Code  
Networking: It's Who You Know  
The 19th Hole: Sizzling Deals

Oddball Moments: MLB's All-Star Games  
The Ethics Guy: Living a Life of Quality  
Palm Springs' Chic Makeover





## STRAIGHT TALK

INSIGHT & ADVICE FROM  
THOSE IN THE KNOW

→ → → BY LIZ SEYMOUR

## BRUCE WEINSTEIN

THE "ETHICS GUY" TELLS WHY OUR CHOICES DEFINE  
THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES.

**Y**ou're an insurance broker. An insurance company offers you a free trip to a very nice resort. There are no strings attached, but obviously you both know that the company hopes that the trip will lead to more business for them. It's tempting, and many of your colleagues have taken similar trips with no qualms, but you're not so sure. Is it OK to accept the offer?

No, says Bruce Weinstein, it's not. "Your clients trust you to make recommendations based on their best interests, not on your loyalty to companies that have treated you to pricey vacations," he wrote in answer to that real-life question, which was submitted to his syndicated weekly newspaper column. "In the long run, your business will profit if you take the high road and just say no to these attempts to unduly influence your judgment." Stay home.

Doctor of philosophy, writer, lecturer, part-time documentary filmmaker, and full-time Ethics Guy, Weinstein knows that it's not always easy to do the right thing — or even to know what the right thing is to do. But that doesn't mean he's ready to let any of us off the hook. On a day in early February, Weinstein — just back from the Sundance Film Festival and dressed in a black sweater, black pants, and comfortable-looking black-suede shoes — sat in the small living room of his Upper East Side New York apartment and talked about the fine art of doing right. His cat Stanley (named for Stanley Kubrick) lay stretched out on a towel on the windowsill; his other cat, Marty ("after Martin Scorsese, of course"), settled himself on the carpet-covered platform of a cat tower in the corner.

"What it all comes down to is choice," Weinstein said. "Every day we face choices, we face temptations, we face possibilities, and it's up to us to make the right choice. Often we take the low road because it's easier, or because of self-defeating patterns, but that doesn't justify it. I'm a great believer in everyone's capacity to change."

These may not be the best times for ethics but they are great times for an Ethics Guy. Weinstein appears regularly on CNN, Fox News Channel, MSNBC, and other networks to give his ethical take on news stories. Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services distributes his weekly syndicated column "Ask the Ethics Guy" to newspapers around the world. He travels regularly to speak to classes, businesses, and non-profits. His message is a simple one: Ethics is not just a matter of doing what is right because it's the right thing to do. In the end, the ethical life is richer and more rewarding than a life without ethics.

Weinstein traces his interest in ethics back to a high-school assignment to read Plato's *Republic*. "I'd heard about Plato, but I had no idea it was written so theatrically," he says. "It reads like a screenplay. The neat thing about the *Republic* is it can be read as philosophy, it can be read as literature, it can be read as politics, but I was really interested in the moral arguments in there." He majored in philosophy at Swarthmore College and followed that with a Ph.D. in medical ethics at Georgetown University. For six years he taught biomedical ethics to medical, dental, nursing, and pharmacy students at West Virginia University Medical School.

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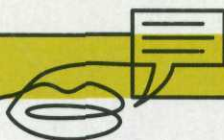
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## STRAIGHT TALK

In 1999, Weinstein moved to New York and began to mount a campaign to become the go-to guy on ethics (he points out that the *other* high-profile ethics guy — Randy Cohen, who appears in the *New York Times Magazine* and on NPR as The Ethicist — does not have a professional background in ethics). It wasn't an easy sell at first. "Television has no shortage of legal

real-life dilemmas of his readers around the world, picking up emails on his Blackberry wherever he is. "Often my best work times come on a plane or a bus, or 20 minutes waiting in an airport," he says.

Weinstein's gentle and humane approach to ethics has clearly struck a chord. "You can teach ethics by making people afraid of doing the wrong thing,

"Not only in our deeds,  
but in our words we  
would do well to consider  
how what we say and do  
affects other people,  
particularly the people we  
care most about."



analysts, military analysts, and political analysts, but people get concerned when they hear "ethics," because they're afraid they're going to hear a point of view grounded in a particular religion or culture." Not so, says Weinstein. The lasting and most basic ethical principles are shared by all major religious and philosophical traditions.

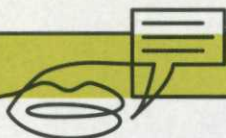
Despite the concerns, Weinstein began getting more and more calls from television networks. A couple of years ago he pitched the idea of an ethical advice column to the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain. Through the weekly column he stays connected to the daily

or you can teach it by explaining what benefits will follow if you take ethics seriously," he says. None of us behave completely ethically all the time.

"Everybody tests the principles of ethics occasionally, and they should," says Weinstein. "It's only by testing them that you learn there may be something to them after all."

When he's not helping readers and viewers make ethical choices, Weinstein is pursuing his other career as a documentary filmmaker. "When I was seven I saw the James Bond movie *You Only Live Twice*. I fell in love with the opening title sequence, the blend of beautiful





music and dazzling images that created this amazing world that didn't exist anyplace else. Even at age seven I thought 'I've got to get into this.' "

While he was teaching in West Virginia, Weinstein was named a National Fellow by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; he used the fellowship to study film at NYU. His first project after leaving academia was to follow a Chicago children's choir as they toured South Africa right after the end of apartheid. The Ethics Guy and the documentary film guy often overlap: His current project follows the story of an ex-Mafia member who is using his past experience in organized crime to discourage young people from getting into a life of wrongdoing.

Earlier this year, Weinstein published a book titled *Life Principles: Feeling Good by Doing Good*. He ethically

"There's something personally enriching about helping other people, and of course, when you enrich the lives of others you enrich your own."

acknowledges that the principles upon which his book is based draw heavily on *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, a textbook co-authored by one of his Georgetown professors. "*Principles of Biomedical Ethics* was written by two scholars pretty much for a scholarly audience, crystallizing centuries of secular humanist and religious thought," he says. "I thought that the principles were too important to be relegated to academia. What I try to do is break it down, make the explication of the principles fun and applicable to everyday life, and try to reach as wide an audience as possible."

The ethical life apparently comes a little harder to some people than to others. "I used to bring a stack of my books with me to my seminars, but I discovered that inevitably some of them would walk away," he says. "I'd say if



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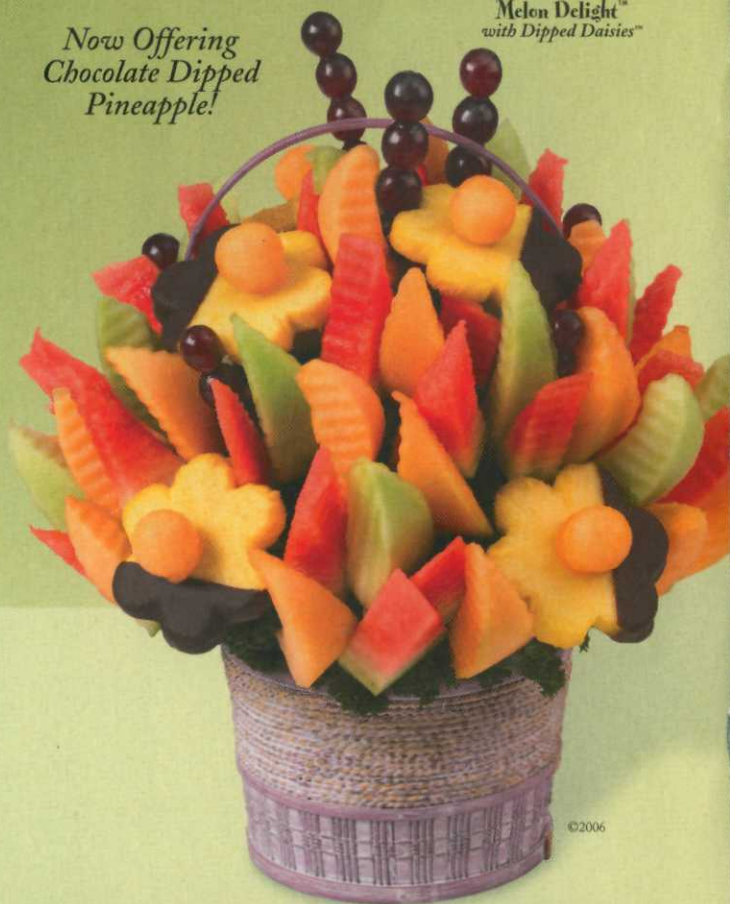
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you need to steal an ethics book it's probably not going to do you any good. On the other hand, if everyone did the right thing I would definitely have to find another line of work and I don't know what that would be."

Below are Weinstein's five fundamental principles on how to live ethically:

**1. Do no harm.** "What kind of a world would it be if we couldn't count on other people to avoid harming us?" Weinstein asks. He adapted the first principle from the doctors' Hippocratic Oath, but applies it much more widely. "Not only in our deeds, but in our words we would do well to consider how what we say and do affects other people, particularly the people we care most about," he says. "‘Do no harm’ doesn't mean only don't hit someone if you feel like hitting them — it means don't say something nasty if you feel like saying something nasty. It doesn't help you and it doesn't help anyone else. ‘Do no harm’ is the basic condition for having any kind of civilized society or culture or community."

**2. Make things better.** Doing no harm is important, but it's not enough.

"If at the end of your life the most you can say is ‘I didn't hurt anyone’ you haven't lived a full ethical life," says Weinstein. "As you weigh ethical choices, it's also important to ask ‘Does this help anyone?’ ‘Does this make a positive difference in the world?’" Principle No. 2 comes with a pay-off: "There's something personally enriching about helping other people," says Weinstein, "and of course, when you enrich the lives of others you enrich your own."

**3. Respect others.** Weinstein's third life principle is made up of three individual components. The first is to keep confidences. The second is to tell the truth. Finally, you should keep your promises. "For many years I would ask people at the end of my seminars why a person should be ethical, and the overwhelming response was some variation

"‘Do no harm’ doesn't mean only don't hit someone if you feel like hitting them — it means don't say something nasty if you feel like saying something nasty."



of ‘So I can look myself in the mirror.’ Rarely would I hear someone say, ‘Because it's the right thing to do.’ I began to think that if this is what people are telling me in Anchorage, Alaska, and Jacksonville, Florida, and Austin, Texas — if wherever I went I'd hear the same thing, I should be paying attention."

Respect for others helps to keep us connected to other people and be straight with ourselves. "By honoring our responsibility to tell the truth, keep our promises, maintain confidentiality, and remain trustworthy," writes Weinstein in *Life Principles*, "we give a gift to all of those with whom we have a relationship. By enriching others we enrich ourselves."

**4. Be fair.** "Of all the principles, the principle of justice and fairness is the most complex and the hardest to get at," says Weinstein. There's no one-size-fits-all-situations measure of fairness. Deciding who gets how much of a scarce commodity is one kind of justice; deciding whether and how someone should be punished is another;

and deciding how to right a wrong is yet another kind of justice. "However the principle is applied, the idea that we ought to be just or fair to people is something that is common to all cultures and all traditions," Weinstein explains. "But what that actually means can vary widely from culture to culture and even within a culture. Is the death penalty fair? Is it fair to punish someone for adultery? Who gets an organ transplant? The important thing is to understand your own criteria of fairness in any given situation and

apply them evenly."

**5. Be loving.** Weinstein added this last principle to the four laid out in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, the main inspiration for his own book. "Without compassion, the moral life really wouldn't be complete," he argues. The first four principles could stand alone, but if we do the right thing only out of a sense of duty and obligation, something is missing. "Compassion," he says, "is the bedrock." ❧

**LIZ SEYMOUR** is veteran writer and contributing editor to this magazine. Her work has appeared in a variety of national publications, including the *New York Times*.