



# Living with Integrity

1 March 2013

## **Hello**

Integrity is one of those words that I think we use quite glibly. We use it without really thinking through what it means. We rate people deliberately on integrity when we are asked to, such as during a 360 degree manager review, and we rate people on integrity without even being fully aware of what we are doing, such as when we are sizing up a potential friend. Whenever I ask people to list the qualities they want in someone else - be it a leader, a boss, or a partner - integrity usually finds its way onto the list somewhere near the top. Many people will say that integrity is a value they personally want to live. So what is integrity? What does it really mean to be a person of integrity?

According to the dictionary (the paper and online version), integrity has its roots in words such as "integrate" and "entire". These are words which mean "to be whole". Integrity means a state of being complete, undivided and unbroken. The opposite would be a state that is scattered, fragmented and incomplete. Living with integrity is about living as a whole and complete person. It is about living your truth in all its facets. It is about being honest with others, as well as yourself.

Integrity is more than just doing what you say you will do. *To have integrity means.....*

- To be honest with others.
- To be honest with yourself - about your wants, needs, feelings, thoughts, hopes, wishes, weaknesses, dreams and desires.
- To say what you mean.
- To do what you say you will do.
- Aligning your thoughts, words and actions with who you really are.
- Not taking credit for the success of others.
- Not stealing - money, time, friends, office supplies etc. Lots of people who would never dream of stealing money from other people will steal their time, their energy, their good name etc.
- Keeping confidential information confidential.
- You keep your promises and you don't make promises you can't keep.
- To own up to mistakes.
- To take responsibility for your actions.
- To live according to your deepest values.
- To live a life that reflects your true priorities.
- You don't say something behind someone's back that you would not say to their face.
- Having the courage to share who you really are.
- Having the courage to make the changes needed for you to become a whole and complete person.



Lack of integrity does not necessarily mean you are a bad person, although we often believe it does. Lack of integrity means you are an inconsistent person. It means you are not operating from your true values and beliefs. It means you are not operating in harmony with yourself. And unfortunately this discordant relationship with yourself is a breeding ground, not only for criminal misdeeds, but also for all manner of destructive and self-sabotaging behaviour. Acting with integrity is one of the most important things we must do to be truly happy and successful in the long-term. So how can we learn to act with more integrity.

### ***To build Integrity***

1. Take personal responsibility for your life. At the heart of integrity is acknowledging that you are in control of your life - no one else.
2. Start by identifying your core values. You can't live your values unless you know what they are. Don't wait until you are faced with tough decisions and the easy way out is too tempting. Decide now what you will or will not stand for. Later when you are faced with important decisions it will be easier to stand firm.
3. Examine the choices you have made in your life. Which ones were aligned with your true self? Which were not? What choices do you make when no one is watching? Do they differ from the choices you make when others are watching?
4. Identify where you are not being truthful in your life
5. Give up rationalising when you compromise your integrity. There are many reasons why people deviate from the truth, and their truth, and you hear them from people in high positions all the time. When you rationalise though realise you sell yourself out. Compromising what you stand for is an act of self-betrayal.
6. Make the decision to strive for 100% consistency. When you let slip the first time you are on a downward slippery slope. We wonder why some people who appear to have it all can mess up so much. Well, it starts with a little fudging here and a bit of lying there, and then it just gets bigger and bigger. Don't compromise on little things unless you want to compromise on the big things too.
7. Realise the end does not justify the means. The journey towards an accomplishment is as important as the end result itself. If you reach your destination and look back on your journey with shame, you will be celebrating a hollow victory.
8. Find role models to emulate. Form relationships with friends and colleagues who live with integrity.
9. Build your self-esteem and assertiveness. It is very difficult to live with integrity without a strong sense of self and a strong belief in yourself.
10. Pick three actions that you can take each day to live with integrity and do them.

***"You do not wake up one morning a bad person. It happens by a thousand tiny surrenders of self-respect to self-interest." ~ Robert Brault***

**Have a wonderful March.**

With best wishes