

INTEGRITY

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(in-teg-ri-tee)

Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty.

The word integrity is derived from the Latin word "integer,"

a mathematical term for a whole number as opposed to a fraction. So, when you live with the moral compass of integrity, it means you tell the whole truth and not just a fraction of it. For example, in a court of law we take an oath to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

If we know that integrity is telling the whole truth, then why do we slant the truth, embellish it, or just tell half of the story? Sometimes it may be that we want to preserve the ideal image we have of ourselves, maybe it is for financial gain or at other times it can be for a social advantage. Sometimes, telling a partial truth may hide our actions, other times it is a method to gain advantage for our own personal benefit, at the expense of others.

Consistency of integrity is about being the same regardless of the situation. Can you think of a person whose mood changes by the day and can make rash decisions on certain days, yet be calm and charming on other days? This would be an example of inconsistency of actions and outcomes. Consistency is a choice we make every single day, even when the situation or environment is not great. If you just had an argument with someone yesterday, consistency means that you will make a conscious choice to shift gears and release yourself from the negativity of the last conversation and not bring that to your next interaction today.

Another aspect of integrity is the honesty or accuracy of one's actions requires intentionality and thought. Consider how honest or accurate are your behaviors, actions, and words with other people that you interact with. When you are "whole" and consistent, there is only one you. You bring that same you wherever you are, regardless of the situation or circumstance. You don't leave parts of you behind. You may need to have a work, home, and social communication style that can be different, but underneath you don't have a "work you" a "home you" and a "social you." YOU and YOU all of the time.

Given the real definition of integrity, we recognize that it is actually extremely difficult to be in a mode of integrity 100% of the time. This is a goal we aspire to achieve, but to be honest, at times, we mess up. Sometimes, our emotions get the best of us and we are unable to intentionally manage our behavior and actions and what others may see or we may feel is less than our aspiration. On occasion we don't give ourselves permission to be our true selves out of fear of what others may think. The fear of being judged can become a powerful force in our mind and mislead our emotions.

In the end, our goal is to truly integrate the various parts of ourselves into a singular, whole person. To be that whole person, our decisions are made in a way that is reflective of our values. It means being the same authentic person regardless of the situation. When you find yourself behaving in a way outside of your values, stop, acknowledge, apologize, and correct your course of action. Be a person that not only lives with integrity, but inspires others to be on the same journey of the lifelong pursuit of being YOU and YOU all of the time.