

Building Higher Trust 56 Integrity

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Trust and integrity are inextricably linked. I believe before you can trust other people, you must trust yourself. That means you must not be fighting with yourself in any way, which is a pretty tall order.

Integrity is about what you do or think when nobody else in the world would know. It is an interesting topic because it is very difficult to determine your own personal

level of integrity.

We Tend to Rationalize

We all justify ourselves internally for most of the things we do. We have it figured out that to take a pencil home from work is no big deal because we frequently do work from home.

We drive 5 mph over the speed limit because not doing so would cause a traffic hazard while everyone else is going 10 mph over the limit.

We taste a grape at the grocery store as a way to influence our buying decision.

When we are short-changed, we complain, but when the error is in the other direction, we pocket the cash.

We may lie about our age. We probably sneak cookies. If you have never done any of these things, let me know, and I will nominate you for sainthood. If you think hard enough, I am sure you can identify something you did that was ill-advised.

Lame Excuse

There are some times in life when we do something known by us to be illegal, immoral, or dumb. We do these things because they are available to us and we explain the sin with a lame excuse like "nobody's perfect."

I guess that is true that all people (except newborns) have done something of which to be ashamed. What's is the big deal? Since we all sin, why not relax and enjoy the ride? That rationale is disastrous because it **destroys integrity**.

Crossing a Fine Line

The conundrum is where to draw a moral line in the sand. Can we do something that is wrong and learn from that error so we do not repeat it in the future? I think we can. I believe we have not only the ability but the mandate to continually upgrade our personal integrity. Here are seven ideas that can help the process:

1. **Reward yourself** - When you are honest with yourself about something you did that was wrong, that is personal growth, and you should feel great about that.
2. **Intend to change** - Once you have become conscious of how you rationalized yourself into doing something unethical, vow to change your behavior in that area and others.
3. **Reinforce others** - Sometimes other people will let you know something you did, or are about to do, is not right. Thank these people sincerely, for they are giving you the potential for personal growth.
4. **Check In with yourself** - Do a scan of your own behaviors and actions regularly to see how you are doing. Many people just go along day by day and do not take the time or effort to examine themselves.
5. **Recognize Rationalization** - We all rationalize every day. By simply turning up the volume on your conscience, you can be more alert to the temptations before you. That thought pattern will allow more conscious choices in the future.
6. **Break habits** - Many incorrect things come as a result of bad habits. Expose your own habits and ask if they are truly healthy for you.
7. **Help others** - Without being sanctimonious, help other people see when they have an opportunity to grow in integrity. Do this without blame or condemnation; instead, do it with love and helpfulness.

Conclusion

We need to build our own internal trust so we can trust other people more. To do that, it is important to follow the seven ideas listed above. These ideas will allow you to move consciously in a direction of higher personal integrity.

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