



honesty dishonesty

Session Three

RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Big Book of AA, Chapter 5, How it Works

**Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery.
But these are indispensable.
BB, Spiritual Experience, pg 570**

What's the deal with honesty? According to How it Works, honesty makes or breaks my sobriety. How do I know if I am "constitutionally incapable of being honest"? What in the world does that mean? Rigorous honesty? That sounds like a recipe for disaster. Am I bound to fail because I tell white lies? How can honesty be more important than self-discipline? Honesty is "essential and indispensable." Does that mean that "cash register" honesty is enough? I don't get it!

Sometimes, the best way to understand a word is to look at its opposite. Let's start a discussion about dishonesty and why it has the power to ruin our life through addiction.

Dishonesty is a spiritual malady, or sickness of the spirit that:

- starts with lies - to cover up our drinking and using. Lies to hide the stupid, embarrassing, destructive things we said and did. Lies to keep out of trouble. Lies to get money and access to our drug of choice.
- leads to a unmanageable life of deception, phoniness, and isolation
- cuts us off from connections with others because we need to hide who we are and what we do
- produces guilt and shame
- make us untrustworthy
- produces chaos in families
- robs us of self-respect
- puts us in courts and institutions

The ultimate in dishonesty - denial, a mental obsession that:

- Won't acknowledge a difficult situation
- Tries to not face the facts of a problem
- Downplays possible consequences of the issue

For many alcoholics and addicts, it's much easier to pretend that the problem doesn't exist. That way, there's no need to make major lifestyle changes or face difficult emotions. Although dishonesty and denial seem easier, it's much harder in the long run. Real Life doesn't support delusions. Real Life doesn't respect adults who don't adult. Real Life is hard for women who are not strong enough to face it. Untrustworthy women will lose family and friends. Denial and dishonesty keep us isolated, lonely, sick in spirit and unable to form true connections with others or a Higher Power. There will be no recovery for women who cannot leave dishonesty behind.



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What Is Rigorous Honesty?

In 12-Step recovery, the standard isn't occasional honesty or attempted honesty, but rigorous honesty. What does this mean?

Rigorous honesty means telling the truth when it's easier to lie, sharing thoughts and feelings even when there may be consequences. In 12-Step recovery, the requirement is taking a fearless personal inventory and promptly admitting to dishonesty. This means catching oneself in the middle of a lie and correcting it, even if it's embarrassing.

Step 1 - We finally get honest with ourselves

Step 4 & 5 - we must be honest with ourselves, a higher power and another human being. We really examine our life to understand ourselves and what we have done.

Steps 8 & 9 - we put our newfound honesty into practical application. It requires the addict to take active steps toward honesty.

Steps 10, 11, 12 - require practicing honesty on a daily basis.

While it is important to be honest about addiction and recovery, rigorous honesty extends to every aspect of life. It involves not only refraining from lies and misdirection but also an awareness of our own fears, limiting beliefs and unhealthy patterns. It requires authentic relationships that leave room for struggles and failures, setting boundaries, and living in accordance with one's own values and principles.

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/addiction-recovery/2012/12/honesty-in-addiction-recovery#What-Is-Rigorous-Honesty?>

How to Increase Honesty in Recovery

STOP lying! This is the easiest and most identifiable form of honesty. If you do lie out of habit, stop as soon as you realize what you have done. Maybe you realize it in the moment or maybe it's at the end of the day when you do your 10th step. Either time is ok. The important thing is that you are building a new habit of awareness.

Own your lies and dishonesty. Mistakes can be fixed if we face them squarely and do our best to rectify them. Running and hiding from our actions guarantees we will fill ourselves with guilt and shame. Guilt and shame are speedways towards drinking and drugs.

Recognize the different ways to be dishonest:

- Plain ole lying - just not telling the truth
- Avoidance or misdirection - hiding the truth without outright lies. Excellent way to deceive yourself into thinking you are honest. You are not.
- Isolation - is just hiding from yourself by hiding from others. The self-delusion that you are safe is a great way to lie to yourself. If you do it long enough, you will probably drink or use out of sadness and disconnection.
- Blaming - another form of lying. We put the responsibility for our own thoughts and behaviors onto someone or something else. Another form of self-delusion.
- Phoniness - you are not true to yourself. You might not even know who you are. This is connected with acting like a chameleon - taking on the characteristics of the people around you instead of acknowledging your own self. The problem is you will always feel "less than" and be waiting to be discovered as the liar you are. True friendship or love cannot thrive when you are not being real.
- People pleasing - it's complicated and a pattern of living that cuts away at what we really are or want to do. We pretend that we are ok with burying our true self under someone else's wants.
- steal or cheat - they teach you not to do this in kindergarten. It's the same rules for adults.