

Gaining the Power of Truth through Honesty

It wasn't by chance that I chose to put honesty first in this exploration of virtues. In my ever-so-humble opinion (don't worry, humility is next!), honesty is paramount on the spiritual journey. After all, the goal of that journey is to attain the highest truth.

Some people make efforts to appear more virtuous than they really are, which isn't quite honest. This tendency brings up a subtle distinction — the difference between making efforts to become more virtuous and merely putting on an outer show without developing true inner virtues. If you put on a plastic smile to hide the sadness you're feeling, that can't be called true happiness, and if you appear to perform good actions just for show, that is not true virtue.

Some have been tempted to substitute an outer-bandage approach of *appearing* virtuous instead of creating real, deep, lasting, and profound spiritual transformation. Here are several problems with this acting-more-virtuous-than-you-are approach:

- **You can't hide who you really are.** Along with the fact that you live in a conscious, intelligent universe that knows what is and is not truth, your subconscious thoughts are also constantly being expressed to other people through everything that comes out of you, including your body language, subliminal speech patterns, and all the ways you express yourself. Even though others may see only what you want them to see on a conscious level, and even if you may seem to fool others by being dishonest, you can be sure that their inner intuition (and the universe itself) is quite aware of any incongruities between your apparent outer virtues and your perhaps not-quite-so inner virtues.
- **The false can obstruct the real.** If you display outer virtues that aren't based on inner sincerity, you may come to think you're virtuous, and others may think you're virtuous. However, this false presentation can actually keep you from doing the inner work necessary for true transformation. Obviously, you need to act appropriately and keep your thoughts, comments, and actions more or less "in the box" when you're in public situations, such as work environments. However, in the privacy of your own home and mind, you can look honestly at what you really feel and think about things in your life. Otherwise, your false image of peacefulness may keep you from doing the inner work required to grow from that circumstance and find true peacefulness. With a happy spirit, you can see and acknowledge the truth of who you are and what you feel so you can grow steadily into greater fields of virtue. The virtue of honesty in the form of self-examination ensures that when you display virtues, they are real.

- **Only true virtues will be there when you need them.** Of course, acting in a virtuous way is always a good idea and tends to inspire more spiritual awareness in your life. Acting happy and thinking positive thoughts can help bring more happiness and positive actions into your life. However, unless you develop virtues that are real and true, you won't be able to apply them to all the events that come up. Remember, life is going to throw some surprises your way — it's inevitable. If you're honest with yourself, whatever real virtues you have will be ready to guide you through all the intricate mazes of this strange ride called life.



Be Careful

Although honesty is a great virtue, it should come with a measure of kindness and consideration. In the name of honesty, you shouldn't just unleash whatever unsavory thoughts and feelings may be bubbling up inside you upon whomever is unfortunate enough to be the one triggering them. The idea is to be honest and decent at the same time.