

**Module # 2**

# **Honesty**

By

**Bill Urell**

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## Introduction

I believe honesty is the heart of any addiction recovery plan. If we do not have a realistic, clear and honest vision of ourselves, our problems, and what we want to accomplish, we're could be in a great deal of difficulty.

The very fact that we had continued and are active in addiction for so long, is almost proof positive of our ability to delude ourselves. In the light of day, and with a clear mind, how could we possibly believe that we were not doing ourselves, and those around us serious harm by continuing our addiction.

The only way we could allow ourselves to indulge in our using behavior is to create a fantasy around ourselves which essentially made it OK to use. These fantasies were self delusions that were rooted in dishonesty and self deception. For a long time I had wondered what the word delusion means. I thought it meant 'crazy', (and there were certainly times I though I was). I looked it up, and it simply means believing in something that is not true.

For the purpose of this discussion let's look at honesty not only in terms of being truthful and not lying, but in not deceiving ourselves. Here is a simple definition of honesty:

**"Honesty is the absence of the intention to deceive"**

I might add that the person most often deceived is ourselves.

Onward,



# Honesty

"There's a lot of talk about the importance of being honest in all our affairs and relationships. I really don't know where to start it's been so long since I've been honest it's almost easier to lie."

Being dishonest can easily become the standard of action, or way of life for most alcoholics or addicts. We deceive ourselves and we lied to others. We lie about how much we used, and how often we used. We hid our feelings and emotions, or became distant from our relationships, perhaps not in all areas, but certainly in terms of our substance use.

We lied about where we went and what we had been doing. It's a way of staking our claim to our right to continue drinking or using drugs. The lies, self deception, and self delusions were created for the for the purpose of allowing us to continue to use. Somehow we needed it all to make sense.

Sometimes it was not even our intention to deceive. But it is simply that our thought processes had become so clouded and confused and distorted, that our sense of reality was way off base and we no longer made sense.

**Many people have discovered that there is a tendency to continue to be untruthful it just doesn't go away when your substance use stops.**

There are two major challenges concerning dishonesty that must be met and overcome in order to enter into a healthy recovery.

1. The dishonesty and lying has to stop. Unfortunately, for many people, this has become a habit. This behavior needs to be 'unlearned' and the habit broken.
2. We must also overcome the fear of the consequences of once again being truthful.

Just as the slide into active addiction was gradual for most people, the slide into a state of being dishonest may have been gradual also. Rome was not built in a day. It seems reasonable to assume that to be returned to the state of being completely honest as the norm will be gradual also.

1. To clear up the web of dishonesty we need to start being truthful with ourselves, firstly. If we cannot stop the self deception, delusion and lying in our own hearts and minds, we won't be able to be truthful with anybody else.
2. To grow and have an enriched recovery is not possible without honesty. Continuing on with a dishonest nature, or deceptive behaviors, can eventually lead us back to our old ways.
3. Being completely honest need not mean being cruel with ourselves. It is just as important to it knowledge our good qualities as well as the qualities that need improvement this can be difficult. A great number of people in recovery have difficulty accepting complements, or thinking well of themselves.
4. "Brutal honesty" that causes pain to others is wrong. The steps of AA speak of an exception to honestly making amends by saying "except when to do so would injure them or others".
5. Let's be realistic. No one can be perfectly honest with themselves or others at all times. As stated before, if we look at honesty as the absence of the intention to deceive, we must be aware that we may, at times, be fooling ourselves and others without intentionally doing so. We simply may not have developed or become aware of the ability and tools to learn how to correctly evaluate the moods, feelings, and situations we find ourselves in which we find ourselves.

**What makes these points and questions so significant for the chemically dependent person in recovery?**

Well, first of all the concept of honesty must be an underlying foundation before we can even start entering recovery. If we are deceiving ourselves about the severity and chronicity of our disease, how it has affected ourselves and others, we will be very unlikely to take appropriate action. Here are some typical modes of

thought, that are based on dishonesty, self deception, or just lack of experiential context

**For example:**

1. If I truly believe that I really do not have an addiction (self deception), what sense does abstinence or recovery make? Why should I apply a solution when a problem does not exist? Especially if the solution or course of action involves a good deal of effort.
2. If I assume the role of blaming other people for my substance use, what motivation is there for me to remain abstinent? After all, if you had my \_\_\_\_\_ ( fill in the blank), husband, job, anxiety, you would be using too. it is your fault I continue to use, not mine. Therefore since it is not my fault I do not have to fix it. You have to fix what you're doing.
3. A tightly related position to blaming, is playing the victim. Again, if I am the victim of circumstances, be it people, places, or things, I can easily get stuck, and not be willing to change. this is a particularly dangerous form of self deception because the reality is life goes on. bad things happen, good things happen, but casting yourself in the role of a helpless victim takes away motivation for change. There is an old saying, "Poor me, poor me, pour me another drink."

**Common Blocks To Honesty**

What is so difficult about being honest even when we want to be?

**The first reason** ....is that we have developed an integrated and complete lifestyle around which dishonesty has been an integral core.

We have come to lie about our drinking or using to the point where we believe our own fabrications ourselves. That makes it difficult for people to communicate or

dispute us. Dishonesty has saturated our emotions, minds, and has come to dominate our behavior and actions.

In other words, we had developed a complete life style and we system based on this honesty, delusion, and distorted truths. It had become an integral part of us. We had become so emotionally dishonest we lost the ability to identify, own, and effectively process our feelings and emotions. (This is an entire future topic). To change the very fabric of a belief system will require constant attention, persistence, and perhaps most important of all... change.

***The second reason*** .... is fear.

There is a certain risk that is involved in being honest and frequently we fear the consequences and pain (mostly to ourselves) that may occur if we're honest. This type of fear is referred to in the 12 steps as self-centered fear the fear that we may lose something we already possess, failed to gain something we want or suffer a loss.

The fear of telling the truth about yourself is almost always groundless. Almost everybody appreciates honesty and sincerity. Your fear can become exaggerated and escalated by worrying more about how people react to you, then by the truth itself.

There is an old saying that says "What other people think about me is none of my business." Whenever the fear of being honest grips me I tried to remember that. Sometimes, if the people we encounter have difficulty hearing truth and honesty, they may have a problem with it themselves, it may not be us at all.

*OK, I've seen the light and I'm going to work on becoming honest so everything will be smooth cruising on the recovery road right?*

Well, that's great tiger, but there may be some bumps in the highway...

One of the consequences of having been dishonest and lying to people that we somehow tend to ignore the fact that people may not trust us. This especially applies to family members. How many times in the current the same old song, and why should they believe you now?

After all they say, if you loved me you would have quit sooner. Gulp...I hate that, but from their point of view it makes sense.

I firmly believe that addiction is a disease of isolation. Not only do we lose the trust of people but we also lose their help. At some point, they will stop trying to help and listen to us. And that can make for very lonely life.

Even though that we have sworn that we are done with our addiction and are on the road to recovery, why should they believe us? This can be incredibly frustrating for the person who is sincerely engaged in recovery. "But I really mean it this time." I believe you, and I sincerely hope it is true. But you have one thing that is undeniably working against you...Are you ready for this, you won't like it, it's going to hit you right between the eyes.

### **Your track record stinks !!!**

Blame it on your past behavior; actions speak infinitely louder than words. But let's move forward. How can people come to believe and trust in you again? The answer is elegant in its simplicity,

### **To gain peoples trust...Become Trustworthy**

The way to become trustworthy is to show consistent action over time. This comes about by "doing the next right thing", on a consistent basis. It is all about making correct and ethical choices. It will take quite some time for your new found honesty to accept it as normal by the people engaged in relationships with you.

Patience is a quality that surrounds honesty. Again, many of us have been dishonest for so long that despite our intentions to be honest it is difficult to do so. It is also difficult to know the difference between honesty and privacy.

Without active work in trying to grow and progress in our recovery, the tendency is always to slip back into old and established patterns of destructive behavior. In

this case being untruthful and self deceptive. A central idea of moving forward into recovery is to change our old established patterns of behavior. One thing that it is very difficult to argue against is that whenever we were doing was not working. We must focus to change those things that need to be changed.


This takes time. It takes time for others to accept our new way of life. It takes time for us to learn how to manage it. It is no small task to change one's view of the world and ourselves. To move from a position of "everyone's out to get me and will, we are put on earth to suffer and die" to a position of hope and the realization that happiness may be within our grasp, is the work of a lifetime.

Initially, some of the slogans and sayings I heard in recovery used to drive me bananas. I thought they were trite, for the brain-dead and brainwashed. The reality was that I was not in a position to accept the truth of them.

The slogan that springs to mind when I consider working on the concept of honesty and becoming more and more truthful with myself is this:

**The goal is progress not perfection**

There's a certain degree of comfort to be had in that slogan, in that it is OK to make mistakes. By making mistakes we are confirming the 'diagnosis' that we're human. We are said to learn from our mistakes... If that is the case, I may be a certifiable genius, or then again, simply certifiable.



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