

Theory ~ Integrity and the Art of Monkey Minding
by Jamie Palmer

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word integrity as “The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles”.

In the entryway of our family home, there were two sayings inscribed on the walls. One you saw as you entered, “Know Thyself”, a quote by the Greek Philosopher Socrates, and the other as you were leaving, “To thine own self be true”, from the English poet and playwright, William Shakespeare. I think of these phrases as representing moral consistency and integrity. These two famous sayings reminded our family everyday of the importance of developing a strong sense of self and of having confidence in who we were.

Integrity is like a filter through which all of your daily life experiences pass. When you truly know yourself, your values, morals, standards, beliefs, and never waver from them, your decisions become clearer, actions towards others are consistent and filled with compassion, fears abate, regrets are non-existent, and you are at peace with yourself and those around you. When you strive to have integrity in everything you think, say, and do, life becomes less complicated.

Without integrity, you are one knee jerk reaction away from your next conflict. Many people react to life based simply upon how they are feeling at the moment. As a result they are seen as unpredictable, moody, insensitive and self oriented. When you have integrity, your actions are based upon what you believe in and who you truly are, and you are seen as consistent, steady, and wise.

Truly knowing yourself takes a little time, but it’s well worth the adventure. After all, who should know you best, but yourself. Make a daily habit of spending quiet time with yourself. Even 15 minutes a day can be sufficient to get to know the real you. Ask yourself some personal questions about life. How do you stand on world issues, war, religion, relationships, etc? Maybe you don’t like the person you are now and the answers you get are disturbing. Then answer them again, but this time, answer them the way you would if you were the person you truly wanted to be. After all, you should be more than just a product of nature and nurture. You spend the most time with yourself, shouldn’t you have the greatest impact and influence on who you are? In getting to know yourself, sometimes you have to reinvent. Change yourself in ways that reflect the values you wish to emulate. Change happens the moment you decide to. All it takes is to act the way you want to be, until you are no longer acting. Example: you want to have more patience, act as if you have all the patience in the world (in thought, word, and deed). It starts to become who you are the moment you begin. Once you have shaped and defined who you are, be consistent and true to yourself.

So what does all this have to do with monkeys? Do you remember the three monkeys See No Evil, Hear No Evil, and Speak No Evil? If not, ask someone older, they’ll most

likely know. When you have integrity, it can influence every part of your life and leave no room for anything less. There is no limit to the transformative power of integrity.

“This above all: to thine own self be true,
and it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

William Shakespeare

To your health and happiness,

Jamie

Jamie Palmer is a licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Senior Mediator with over 35 years experience in the field of Psychology working with families, couples, and individuals. Jamie resides in Door County with her husband and two dogs in a cabin in the woods. Jamie can be reached at Timberhousedc@yahoo.com or at her office 920/743-9554.