CHAPTER 12

INTEGRITY:
CHARACTER COUNTS

The most important persuasion tool you have in your entire arsenal is integrity.

—Zig Ziglar

The world *integrity* comes from the Latin word *integritas*. It means purity, correctness, soundness, and blamelessness. It can also be defined as consistency between your values and actions, between what you believe and what you actually do. When you want to influence others and enhance your charisma, you must radiate integrity. People must know and feel that you believe what you say and will do what you say. We want to be around people we know are honest, sincere, and genuine. The first part of tapping into your integrity is knowing yourself, knowing your values, and knowing exactly what you stand for.

What do you really believe in, and what are you willing to stand
up for? Do you have a strong personal conviction that dictates all the decisions you make? When you radiate integrity, people know your values and beliefs. At times we are faced with a conflict between our beliefs and desires. Our integrity then dictates which one is right and therefore which one will succeed. Pure integrity helps you establish the ground rules before things get tense or emotional. It determines who you are and how you will respond to a given situation before it happens.

The moment of influence is tarnished when no one knows where you stand or what you believe. This creates conflict, indecision, and resistance. Creating a perception of integrity does not happen overnight; it is not recognized in an instant by those you attempt to influence. It is a combination of your history, your honesty, your fairness, and your unimpaired judgment. The challenge with integrity is that it takes time to build and seconds to lose.

Having great integrity is also part of your character. Character is made up of such qualities as honesty, sincerity, and predictability. I consider solid character and integrity to be the very foundation of one’s ability to succeed. No success is going to be great or lasting if it stems from questionable ethics, motives, or behaviors. Even if you are an honest person of great character, it is human nature for people to cast sweeping judgments and formulate opinions without all the facts. So, if you want genuine trust and lasting integrity, you must avoid even the appearance of anything that might be considered untruthful or unethical.

Isn’t it interesting to see so many corporate mission statements containing the word integrity and yet so many of these companies brought down by the lack of it? Usually, what brings these companies down isn’t the action of outside market forces but the lack of integrity on the inside. One historical example is the Great Wall of China. The people wanted to feel safe; they wanted security. So they built a wall so big and so impressive that no one could climb over it. It was impenetrable and no one could smash it down. This Great Wall was 4,000 miles long, up to 25 feet high and 15 to 30 feet wide. But during the first 100 years of the Wall’s existence, it failed to keep out China’s enemies. What was going on? It was the lack of integrity of the people inside the Wall. The gatekeepers were bribed to let in the enemies, who marched right through without meeting any resistance.
BLIND SPOT

Creating a perception of integrity tends to be a challenge for many people because most don’t realize how they are coming across to others. They feel they have enough integrity and are doing okay. Or they might think others should have integrity, but cutting corners here and there is no big deal. When you think this way, it will erode your personal foundation of integrity. To be charismatic, you must tap into that internal guidance system that navigates you correctly through every situation. It is a compass that will guide your thoughts and your feelings based on integrity. Making decisions and choosing a direction are so much easier when you have a foundation of integrity, know what you believe, and are willing to stand up for your beliefs and values.

APPLICATION

What are your values? What do you really believe in? Tapping into your values will increase your passion, your integrity, and your ability to influence other people. You cannot influence or inspire others if you do not know your own values and are therefore unable to share them with others. Here are some tips to help you tap into and discover your values and how to live by those values:

- Write down your definition of a value.
- Take time to ponder and reflect on your true beliefs.
- Find people you respect and define their values.
- Find people in history you admire, and determine whether their values are your values.
- Live up to everything you say you are going to do.
- Tell the truth even though it hurts.

EXAMPLE

A great example of integrity is Mitt Romney. He is credited with saving the 2002 Winter Olympics. First of all, he turned around
what had been a growing fiscal crisis and made the 2002 games a financial success. Perhaps more important, he restored the damaged reputation of the United States Olympic organization. The previous Olympic committee had been scarred by bribery and ethics complaints. Unethical things had happened, which began to destroy the credibility of the Olympic Games. Americans were angry; many said they would not even watch the Winter Games on TV. Mitt Romney was called in to save the day. His integrity and honesty turned the games around. He was open, forthright, and unbending in his values. He did not try to hide or cover up anything that had happened. As a result, the American people felt he was being honest with them and sensed his integrity. He was able to restore the confidence in the Games and in the Olympic committee.

CHARISMA KEY

Today (and every day), do what you say you are going to do. Integrity is not something you need to announce or broadcast. When so-called religious people have to announce how religious they are, we know to watch out. If you make promises to others, learn to keep them even if they seem minor to you; they might be major to other people. Own up to your mistakes or errors. You do not have to be perfect, but have the character and integrity to try. People appreciate your honesty about your mistakes and weaknesses—they see them, even if they don’t call you on them. Today admit a past (or present) mistake and watch the respect increase and your sense of integrity soar.

Rate Your Integrity
Add your score to page 182.

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