

Seed for achievement

Integrity – being honest and having strong morals – is a key principle for success in life whether that's relationships, work or business.

Each section of this program is built upon a major principle, a great idea which automatically produces the results we want. This lesson focuses on integrity, or as Nightingale describes it: a principle that never fails. Integrity enriches our lives and brings peace of mind because you are being true to yourself, your values and your beliefs.

People want to deal with people with integrity. They expect it in their leaders but that doesn't mean integrity is stiff or dour. Integrity can come with a sense of humour, with kindness and compassion.

Let's make it clear what integrity is not. It's never taking the easiest, quickest but not quite right path because everyone else is. If you live with integrity you never say: "Well, everybody else is doing it. I guess it won't hurt if I do it too". If it's the wrong action it does hurt, it does harm.

Integrity helps us to achieve. It means acting honestly. Perhaps it's best expressed by Polonius in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*: "And 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". As Polonius says, if we're true to ourselves, we cannot be false to anyone else. It means that our word matters, that people can trust us to do as we say. We'll be respected wherever we go.

Nightingale tells a story:

“During the Korean War the Chinese communists overran an American position and captured an American general. He was subjected to weeks of terrible treatment, brainwashing and questioning. He never gave in. Finally he was told that unless he answered their questions, he would be executed the following morning. That night he wrote a letter to his wife, and at the end of his letter he said, “Tell Johnny the word is ‘integrity’. As it turned out, he was not executed and he was later repatriated to American forces, but thinking he was going to die, he told his son that the word is integrity.”

Integrity means trying our best to know ourselves, to assess our abilities and talents, our goals and desires.

Dr Brand Blanshard Emeritus professor of Philosophy at Yale said: “It is important to happiness not to think too much about it. The person who continually asks himself if he’s happy is apt to miss his end, for happiness as Aristotle thought, is a byproduct of healthful and successful activity.

“Bertrand Russell, who wrote *The Conquest of Happiness* remarked that “scientists are generally happier than artists, since they’re commonly lost in objective tasks and not examining their navels”.

Happiness comes from within. It’s finding what you can do best and doing it with all your might.

“The main principle of my ethics is”, Brand Blanshard writes, “to act as to make the world as much better as possible. I’ve not lived up to it; no one has.”

Nightingale disagrees with Dr Blanshard as he and many others have made the world a better place. But trying to live up to Dr Blanshard’s aim is hard. You need to look forward to the consequences of your actions, avoid acting on impulse and only pursue those actions that will bear fruit. Blanshard goes on to say that many people think that acting on impulse is a requirement of happiness, but warns that chasing happiness blindly too often leads to unsatisfying, illusory happiness.

For me integrity also means that our thoughts, feelings and actions are all in harmony. Integrity to truth, to the evidence, no matter where it leads. I

especially like Blanshard's saying: "The richness of a life depends not only on the amount of happiness it achieves, but on finding out who one is; that is, about one's unique combination of powers, and then discovering through experiment and reflection, what course of life will fulfil those powers most completely."

Nightingale urges us to identify our powers. There's something, probably several things, that you can do especially well, that you most enjoy doing, and that will provide the greatest service to others. Find out, through experiment and reflection, what course of life will allow you to fulfil those powers most completely. For Nightingale that's being true to yourself; that's integrity; that's reasonableness.

Being truthful with ourselves means taking responsibility for making the best use of what we have: our minds, abilities, talents and time. These, our possessions, are priceless. How we invest that will determine what we get back in return.

As Nightingale explains:

"Our mind, our abilities, our talents, and time: no one can take those away from us; we take them with us wherever we go, and they represent our true wealth. That's what makes the human being autonomous, although most people don't know it.

"The weak human being does what it's told or directed to do; it's completely unaware of its own strength. It doesn't know how easily it can do what it wants to do, and millions of miraculous human creatures live in tiny prisons of their own fashioning, completely unaware of their powers to be free, to do what they would most love to do, and in so doing, reap a harvest beyond their wildest imaginings. They're slowest in their ignorance, and follow each other around and around. How have they invested their wealth, their mind, their abilities, their talents and time? They're not even aware of it.

"As with the ownership of wealth of any kind, it's up to us to decide what use we'll make of it. We can squander it until it's gone or we could invest it with intelligence and purpose and receive an abundant return, a return which will more than provide for our families all the years of our lives.

“The choice is ours, and it’s here that integrity comes into the picture, for we are the only ones from whom we can steal time, talent, ability and the use of our minds. It’s making the best use of what we have, what we are, in the time that’s been granted us. Sound simple? Well, truth is always simple and uncomplicated. As soon as we properly invest our true wealth, we place ourselves above competition. We’re no longer competing, we’re creating; we’re understanding something that the great majority of people have never known. Here is the foundation upon which every great career has been built in every field.”

I urge you to invest your time and energy into working out what integrity means to you. What are your abilities and talents? What are your values? Start making notes, on your digital or physical note pad.

Most people don’t live with integrity. Instead they seek ease. If it’s easier to be honest, they’ll be honest. But if it’s easier to get an advantage by not being entirely honest, by withholding some information or fudging it, fine. Most people go for short-term, even instant gratification. Nightingale warns us about “the unfailing boomerang”. He says that every time a person does something dishonest, whether it’s small or large, stealing stationery or defrauding the company of thousands of dollars, he’s throwing the boomerang. A little white lie or manipulating the truth both launch the boomerang. No one knows how far the boomerang will go before it comes full circle and the dishonesty is revealed.

Honesty, unfailing integrity, is good business. In fact, Mirabeau wrote: “If honesty did not exist, we ought to invent it as the best means of getting rich.” Ask yourself in every situation: “Is this true? Is this honest? Is this the best I can do? And if the answer is yes, go ahead confidently.

I’ve already said that success depends on others. Aim to win the hearts and minds of the people you serve by helping them. Make their lives better in some way. If you’re willing to settle for giving less than your best, you’re working against yourself.

Nightingale summarises:

“Integrity means giving everything we do our very best. It means being

true to ourselves and to every other person with whom we come in contact. This gives meaning and comfort to our leisure time; our rest has been earned. We know we'll move ahead toward our goals simply because we've become remarkable people; we cannot go unnoticed! The person of integrity is always needed, in every undertaking. It means a willingness to keep an open mind, to look for truth all the years of our lives, to check things out for ourselves, to weigh what others tell us and make our own judgments. It's knowing that there's always a better way to do everything, and a better way still to do that. It's looking for that better way in everything we do. It's realizing that the person who does not read is no better off than the person who cannot read, and that a person who does not continue to learn and grow as a person, is no better off than the one who cannot. It means that we must walk with integrity every day of our lives to truly reap the abundant harvest all the years of our lives. It's realizing that the greatest joy a human being can experience is the joy of accomplishment.

"Remember to think of your life as that plot of rich soil waiting to be seeded. It can only return you that which you sow. You have a great wealth. You have a mind; you can think. You have many abilities. You have talents that you still may not have explored, and you have time; time which cannot be saved, stopped nor held back for a second. Make full use of these riches, it's never too late. Use truth as your guide, integrity as your manner, and your plot of ground will return to you and yours an abundance which will amaze and delight you.

"If you find yourself depressed or confused, remember this comment by Dean Riggs. He wrote: "Do your work; not just your work and no more, but a little more for the lavishing sake, that little more which is worth all the rest. And if you suffer as you must, and if you doubt as you must, do your work. Put your heart into it and the sky will clear, and then out of your very doubt and suffering will be born the supreme joy of life."

I have devoted much of my time to learning and growing. Reading the work of great thinkers, working out how I can apply it to my life and work and then applying it. Reflecting on what I do and how I do it, seeing where I can do better. I have turned the £100 in my pocket I had as a 19-year-old arriving in the UK as a refugee fleeing civil

war in Sri Lanka into a global business. But more than that it's work that is of service to society, colleges that help others to achieve their goals in life. I also look for where I can be of service to others whether its charities or causes that mean something to me or lifting up the next generation. As I said, integrity means our thoughts, feelings and actions are all in harmony and we can move forward sure that we're acting in line with our principles. I urge you to seek to learn each day, to examine what you do and the value you bring. Ensure that you're acting with integrity.

Acting with integrity is essential. What does it mean to you?

What are your values? What matters most to you?

What are your abilities and talents? We all have abilities and talents and some are less obvious and others. If you're stuck ask someone close to you what they think your abilities and talents are.

Be very honest with yourself. Can you think of an occasion where you compromised your values or didn't make the most of your abilities/talents? Why did this happen? How can you avoid the same scenario in the future?

Think of a task that you don't enjoy doing and commit to doing it this week to the best of your ability. How did it feel?