

## How Rigorous Must Honesty Be

Devoid of All Motives to Deceive

Is there a difference between *being Honest* and *being Rigorously Honest*, and if not, why add the word rigorous, unless to imply that Honesty comes in degrees? I know that when I first was faced with the challenge of being honest, where it is mentioned three times in the first paragraph of Chapter Three, How It Works in the Big Book, (Alcoholics Anonymous). I wasn't against being honest and I was willing to give it my best shot. *Could I attain perfect honesty? I think not.* I could, however, reign in my lying about things that mattered, but that still left me with, what I felt was, a half measures approach and that did not sit well with me. If I was willing to be dishonest about anything, I was leaving myself opened to rationalizing and still I was conflicted. If I could lie once, wouldn't that be like taking just one drink? The second lie comes easier. Was I dishonest if I embellished the size of the fish, I caught last weekend? All these questions ran through my mind, and many more before I came upon an approach that worked for me, and it all seems to rest upon what my motives are.

I was attending a discussion meeting one evening and the topic was RIGOROUS HONESTY, and many of these questions were discussed without resolution until a gentleman defined the word *HONEST, as DEVOID OF ALL MOTIVES TO DECEIVE.* That meaning of the word gave me the latitude to practice that principle in the spirit that I believe the founders of A.A. would approve of. If you read the Big Book and the 12&12 you will find some overriding principles concerning these dilemmas. One that comes to mind immediately is: We cannot buy our own peace of mind at the expense of others. (Step 9 in the 12&12) and I would add *"my own self-righteousness at the feet of my loved ones.*

If the definition of honesty is "devoid of all motives to deceive" it leaves me with room to be kind during those innocent moments when my wife returns from the hairdresser and asks me if I like her new hairdo. I always like her new hairdo. *The being kind clause trumps the rigorous clause, and I am not trying to deceive anyone.* What are hairdos supposed to look like anyway? Being honest without sensitivity is brutality. There is one area where I must be rigorously honest, and that is, with Myself. I must not let, what I refer to as, *overriding principles get stretched out of proportions* to the degree that I start to *rationalize and become deceptive again.* The *trust and respect* we gain when we follow these principles do not come easy and if we compromise it, we may never get it back. In step 9, it also makes exceptions where full disclosure would cause actual harm. When in doubt, I can enlist the help of a trusted advisor and, I can be *rigorously honest with him*, live in the spirit of these principles and still have *honest integrity.*