



## What is Self-Honesty and Why is it Important?

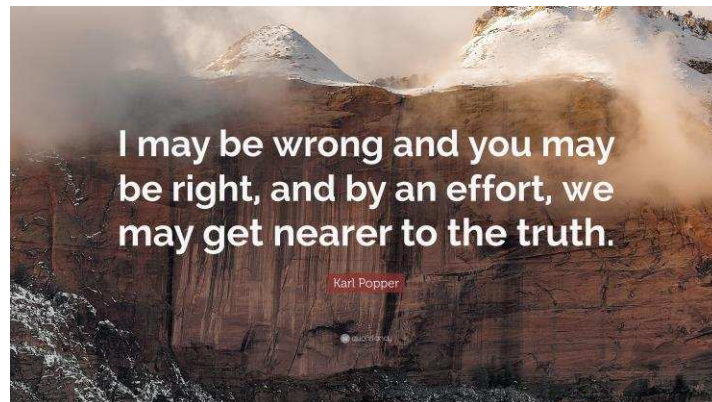
Honesty all around is so important. However, one specific aspect of honesty that is critical along the path to self-awareness is learning to be honest with yourself. No one is perfect when it comes to self-honesty but some people are better at it than others. Unfortunately, lying to oneself can become so deeply ingrained and habitual that an individual can become completely blind to the reality that many others can clearly see. (It's like the old saying says: DENIAL stands for "Don't Even Know I Am Lying")

Learning to be honest with yourself can be one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. You can choose to stroke your own ego by telling yourself little lies to make yourself feel better when things start to feel uncomfortable. However if you are really only lying to yourself, any relief you may be getting is only temporary especially when the wakeup call of reality eventually comes to light. Self-honesty is a way out of that cycle.

### ***What is involved in self-honesty and avoiding the trap of self-deception?***

- 1- **Consider the possibility that you may be wrong** – *There was a time when the prevailing view was that the world was flat until someone challenged that belief and learned the truth. People who insist that they are always right are limiting their potential to adapt, learn and grow*

**GROUP QUESTION:** *Can you think of an example in your own life when you once swore you were right about something but later learned that you needed to change your viewpoint?*



- 2- **Do not automatically close yourself off to viewpoints just because you initially feel that you disagree with them** – *Were you ever that teenager telling all the grownups "I'm just having a little fun – I've got everything under control" - only later to find out you should have listened to them?*

**GROUP QUESTION:** *What is a viewpoint that you currently disagree with, that perhaps you could be more open minded about if you took a little bit of time to try to learn more about it?*





- 3- **Do the math – Does what you say is true, really add up?** (Or do you just want it to be true) – *For example, consider a man who says he is desired by many because of his good looks, which perhaps was true for him in High School but in reality he hasn't been on a halfway decent date in years.*

**GROUP QUESTION:** *What is an area of your life that it may be a good idea to really sit down and honestly evaluate your current progress?*



- 4- **Look for evidence – If something is true there should be some proof more than just a “feeling” –** *Consider an athlete who brags that he or she “knows” that he/she is the “best”, but later that doesn't end up showing itself in the win/loss column*

**GROUP QUESTION:** *How do you really know that you are making progress? What evidence do you use to honestly measure it?*



- 5- **Listen to the people who know you, love you and whom you can trust –** *Sometimes other people can be wrong, however quite often others can see things that you may not be seeing, so it's worth a listen even if it hurts sometimes.*

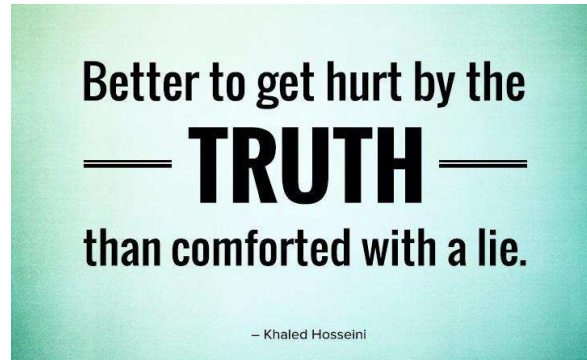
**GROUP QUESTION:** *Who can you go to in order to get a truthful and honest assessment about how you are really doing?*

Listening  
=  
Learning



- 6- **Speaking of hurting, there is some truth to the phrase “the truth hurts”** – If you are sensitive to a certain criticism be mindful that maybe there is some element of truth to it that you need to work on (Otherwise if it doesn't apply – let it fly) – *Imagine, for example, a person who always gets angry whenever people tell him that he is angry*

**GROUP QUESTION:** *What topics might come up in your life that can sometimes make you feel a little bit sensitive, guarded or defensive?*



### Thoughts that can lead to Self-Deception and Self-Destruction

The following challenging exercise is for a more advanced group with some insight and ability to really think and reason. *Are you up to the challenge?* Keep in mind, the following phrases in this next exercise on occasion may have some truth in them depending upon the circumstances. However, in many situations these thoughts can become **deceptive excuses for some really bad decisions**.

Directions: Cut out each square on the next page and hand them out to members of the group. The goal is to come up with an example of how the thought listed in **bold print** can be a form of **self-deception that can lead to a bad decision**. Try to come up with a brief story that serves as an example:

(If the group is large, work on each example in pairs of two.) **An example for the first phrase is provided:**

**“I want therefore I must have”** –

- **Example of a story of self-deception and bad decision-making based on this** – Johnny had a strong urge to be with his best friend Tim's girlfriend Sarah. Sarah was one of the most beautiful girls he had seen in a while and Johnny wanted her all to himself and felt that he had to have her: (**“I want, therefore I must have”**). Johnny thought to himself, I am better looking than Tim and a lot funnier too, she would be happier with me. Johnny put in a lot of time flirting with Tim's girlfriend and doing his best to steal her away from Tim while Tim was not paying attention. Eventually Johnny's plan worked and Sarah eventually cheated with Johnny behind Tim's back. What was the result? Johnny really damaged his friendship with Tim once Tim found out. Also, after a few months of dating Sarah, Johnny found himself constantly paranoid that she was going to do the same thing to him that she did to Tim by cheating on him with the next guy who comes along.



**Cut out and distribute the following and come up with your own examples of self-deception:**

<p><b>“I want, therefore I must have” –</b> Just because we may want something, doesn't mean that it's good for us</p>	<p><b>“I like, therefore I must have”</b> Just because we like the way something looks, sounds, tastes, smells or feels, doesn't always mean it's good.</p>
<p><b>“That's just not who I am”</b> Sometimes people will just make this statement as an excuse not to change when they really need to</p>	<p><b>“There's nothing I can do about it”</b> Maybe you can't change the situation, but can you change your attitude about it?</p>
<p><b>“If I ignore it, it will go away by itself”</b> Sometimes people think burying their head in the sand will make a problem go away. You can't always count on that. Some problems you need to face</p>	<p><b>“It doesn't even matter...”</b> Sometimes it doesn't matter but you have to make sure you are not deceiving yourself by telling yourself it doesn't matter when perhaps it really does</p>
<p><b>“Everyone has to like and approve of me”</b> It is nice to be liked but sometimes we all have to make choices about doing the right thing even if some others do not like it</p>	<p><b>“If I believe it strongly enough, it must be true”</b> Standing behind your beliefs is admirable and honorable. However, believing in something, strongly does not in itself automatically make it true.</p>
<p><b>“I must be the way my family and child life shaped me out to be”</b> We are all somewhat molded by our past and our upbringing however we are not destined to follow the path laid out in our youth</p>	<p><b>“My fears are all legitimate and I must listen to them”</b> Fear serves a purpose because it can be a protection. However, not all fears are rational excuses for our behavior</p>
<p><b>“I am not influenced by others whom I surround myself with”</b> No one is safe from the power of association. No one. Positive people will have a positive influence and negative people a negative one. It is simple human nature</p>	<p><b>“If I let go of my anger toward others who wronged me, then they win”</b> Not every score must be settled and not every wrong needs to be “righted”. Often, the best course, when possible, is to forgive, forget and move forward in a positive manner.</p>
<p><b>“I have to always be right to be strong”</b> There is a time to stand up for what you feel is right but there is also a time to be humble and let others show you the way.</p>	<p><b>“I'm just not good (or strong) enough”</b> No matter what you may have done in your past you can still change the course of your future. Believing this lie has held many good people back from living up to their potential</p>

**Closing Discussion:**

**Which, if any do you have to watch out for in your own experience?  
How can you adjust and adapt in order to improve?**