

3. Discover how you sabotage your commitment. These are the old habits, which a translucent relationship will uncover and eventually dissolve. For example, you might be committed to honesty but find you easily sabotage your commitment by censoring, because you are afraid people will not like you. When you have explored these three questions alone, you can bring them to your beloved, to your family, or even to a group of friends. Take your time to share everything you discovered, and to listen to others' discoveries too.
4. Now it is possible to make clear agreements in any relationship, agreements that serve what you most deeply value, that allow you to honor where you are naturally committed, and that can liberate the ways we all sabotage ourselves.

Honesty

The most powerful gift we can bring to our relating is the conscious practice of honesty. Under Iago's spell, telling the truth evokes many conflicting reactions. We may try to be honest to protect an image of being a morally superior person; to prevent the other from leaving us; to avoid guilt, fear of punishment, and other uncomfortable feelings; or to conform to a learned moral framework. We may also avoid being honest in an attempt to look good, to protect the other from hurt feelings, or to rebel against moral conditioning.

Honesty is just being completely present, and describing that. Honesty is describing; it doesn't have any adjectives. You can talk about what's going on in your mind and report it as a thought you're having, without doing a sales pitch for it.

— Brad Blanton

We can also adopt honesty as a discipline to deepen presence, to expose and evaporate everything we carry within us that interferes with love. It can be a spiritual discipline, rather than something done in service to separation. Honesty is not just a moral principle. When we avoid the truth,

we are cut off from ourselves. If you lie to another, you've also created a wall between you and yourself. We split infinity into two, and divide our own intrinsic wholeness. Brad Blanton, who has been a clinical psychologist for more than thirty years, came to translucence through the rigorous and sustained practice of radical honesty. Blanton describes honesty as being

completely present and describing your experience just as it is: “You can take the whole awareness continuum and divide it into three parts. Notice what is going on right now outside of you in the world, what is going on within the confines of your own skin, and what is going through the mind right now, and that’s all there is. Noticing and reporting what is here is honesty... just saying it right out as though you didn’t know any better.” Blanton thinks of honesty as a spiritual practice more than as a moral virtue:

We know meditation develops your capacity to be present. It becomes more complicated with eyes open, and even more challenging when it involves feelings and interactions with other people. Radical honesty is simply the predisposition for meditation that involves interactions with other people. Honesty and intimacy are really the same thing. When you’re honest, the boundaries between yourself and the other break down, and you experience more oneness or more of a mutual beingness.

Entering into mutual agreements with your partner, friends, and community to end withholding and deception may be more challenging than first meets the eye. But it is worth the price we have to pay. The old habit that creates most separation, and that pulls attention back most forcibly into Iago’s grip, is the tendency to withhold. Says Blanton:

The biggest rationalization for lying is “I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings,” the second is “I don’t want to offend anybody,” and the third is “I don’t want to make a fool of myself.” I recommend that you do all three. But stay present with people and let them stay with you until you feel your way through it and get clear. I recommend that you hurt people’s feelings till they get over having their feelings hurt, and offend people but stay with them; don’t do a drive-by. Make a fool of yourself, be a fool in life, be embarrassed, ashamed, whatever emotion comes up, do it out loud, and if you’re scared, feel your way through it and go on to the next limit.

Relationship is like a dance floor. Anytime you don’t tell the truth it’s like putting a gob of well-chewed bubble gum on the floor. Your foot sticks to it, and you can’t quite participate in the dance until you handle that. Then you are free to look for a bigger space to dance in, and new ways to dance together.

— Gay Hendricks

While researching this book, I was hard put to find anyone who had added honesty to their awakening and later regretted it. Practicing honesty as a translucent discipline is not just a disposition; it involves cultivating very specific skills, which in many ways run counter to our habits. Kathryn Hendricks gives her definition of being honest:

It is to describe what is going on in any given moment in a way that doesn't blame anybody. It's a whole set of skills: being able to pay attention, to notice

I love every moment I look and there's Peter. I just love that he arises in my world again and again. I delight and enjoy and feel showered upon by his presence in my world. I love him!!

— Aneeta Makena

what is actually occurring, and then to describe what is occurring in a way that matches the experience. And the act of doing that is tremendously enlivening. It literally will flush out and create a burst of aliveness; it flushes out any old grit, either physical or emotional. It is very, very powerful, but it is

also a skill that people can learn and can develop. They don't have to either know it or not know it; they can literally develop it.

Following is an exercise you can do with your intimate partner, or with anyone interested in deeper intimacy, for practicing moment-to-moment honesty.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Here-Nowing

Sit opposite one another. Breathe. Maintain soft eye contact.

Partner A, you will only listen. No interrupting, no commentary, no reaction at all.

Partner B, you will tell the truth about this moment by describing body sensations, feelings, sounds you hear, things you see. When you notice a thought or a judgment, you can include it but label it as what it is. "Now I'm having a thought that I am boring." "Now I am having a judgment that you have a terrible haircut."

Keep coming back to now, and tell the truth about it. Be careful of words and phrases like "why," "because," "you made me feel." None of them is true right now; they are all interpretations of experience, not the real deal.