

Honesty



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This is an exercise to help you get honest with yourself. In recovery, it is essential to tell the truth. As you will hear at every 12-step meeting, this is a program of rigorous honesty. “Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves” (Alcoholics Anonymous [AA], 2001, p. 58).

Why is it so important to be honest? Because dishonesty to self and others distorts reality. “Rigorous honesty is the most important tool in learning to live for today” (Narcotics Anonymous [NA], 1988, p. 92). You never will solve problems if you lie. You need to live in the facts. In sobriety, you must commit yourself to reality. This means accepting everything that is real.

People who are chemically dependent think that they cannot tell the truth. They believe that if they do, they will be rejected. The facts are exactly the opposite; unless you tell the truth, no one can accept you. People have to know you to accept you. If you keep secrets, then you never will feel known or loved. An old AA saying states, “We are only as sick as our secrets.” If you keep secrets from people, then you never will be close to them.

You cannot be a practicing alcoholic or drug addict without lying to yourself. You must lie and believe the lies, or else the illness cannot continue. The lies are attempts to protect you from the pain of the truth. If you had known the truth, then you would have known that you were sick and needed treatment. This would have been frightening, so you kept the truth from yourself and from others. “Let us face it; when we were using, we were not honest with ourselves” (NA, 1988, p. 27).

There are many ways you lied to yourself. This exercise will teach you exactly how you distorted reality, and it will start you toward a program of honesty. Answer each of the following questions as completely as you can.

1. *Denying:* You tell yourself or others, "I do not have a problem." Write down at least five examples of when you used this technique to avoid dealing with the truth.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2. *Minimizing:* You make the problem smaller than it really is. You might have told yourself, or someone else, that your problem was not that bad. You might have told someone that you had a couple of beers when you really had six. Write down at least five examples of when you distorted reality by making it seem smaller than it actually was.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3. *Being hostile:* You become angry or make threats when someone confronts you about your chemical use. Give at least five examples.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

4. *Rationalizing:* You make an excuse. "I had a hard day." "Things are bad." "My relationship is bad." "My financial situation is bad." Give at least 10 examples of when you thought that you had a good reason to use chemicals.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

5. *Blaming*: You shift the responsibility to someone else. “The police were out to get me.” “My wife is overreacting.” Give at least five examples of when you blamed someone else for a problem you caused.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

6. *Intellectualizing*: You overanalyze and overthink about a problem. You avoid doing something about it. “Sure, I drink some, but everyone I know drinks.” “I read this article, and it said that this is a drinking culture.” Give at least five examples of how you use intellectual data and statistics to justify your use.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

7. *Diverting*: You bring up another topic of conversation to avoid the issue. Give at least five examples.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

8. Make a list of five lies that you told to someone close to you about your drinking or drug use.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____
5. _____
9. Make a list of five lies that you told yourself about your drug problem.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
10. Make a list of 10 people you have lied to.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. How do you feel about your lying? Describe at least five ways you feel about yourself when you lie.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
12. List five things you think will change in your life if you begin to tell the truth.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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13. List five ways you use lies in other areas of your life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

14. When are you the most likely to lie? Is it when you have been drinking or using addictive behavior?

15. Why do you lie? What does it get you? Give five reasons.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

16. Common lies of addiction are listed here. Give a personal example of each. Be honest with yourself.

A. Breaking promises:

B. Pretending to be clean and sober when you are not:

C. Pretending you remember things when you do not remember because of the addiction:

D. Minimizing use: Telling someone you drink or use no more than others use:

E. Telling yourself that you were in control when you were not:

F. Telling someone that you never have been involved in addictive behavior:

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G. Hiding morning drinking:

H. Hiding your supply:

I. Substituting the addiction for food or things you or your family needs:

J. Saying that you had the flu when you were really hungover or sick from the addiction:

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K. Having someone else call into work to say that you are too sick to come to work:

L. Pretending not to care about your addiction:

People who are addicted lie to avoid facing the truth. Lying makes them feel more comfortable, but in the long run they end up feeling isolated and alone. Recovery demands living in the truth. "I am an alcoholic or an addict." "My life is unmanageable." "I am powerless over alcohol." "I need help." "I cannot do this alone." All of these are honest statements from someone who is living in reality.

Either you will get real and live in the real world, or you will live in a fantasy world of your own creation. If you get honest, then you will begin to solve real problems. You will be accepted for who you are.

Wake up tomorrow morning and promise yourself that you are going to be honest for the next hour. Then try it for a half-day and then a whole day. Stop and check your feelings, and write down five ways you feel different when you are honest.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Write down in a diary when you are tempted to lie. Watch your feelings when you lie. How does it feel? How do you feel about yourself? Keep a list of five ways you feel different about yourself when you lie. Keep a diary for 5 days, and share it with your group or counselor. Tell them why you lied and how you felt about yourself when you lied. Then tell the group or counselor how it feels to be honest.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Take a piece of paper and write the word *truth* on it; then tape it to your bathroom mirror. Commit yourself to rigorous honesty. You deserve to live a life filled with love and truth. You never need to lie again.

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