

## 10 Qualities You'll Find in a Person of Integrity

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By Anthony B. Robinson

At the time of the Seeds of Compassion event and the Dalai Lama's visit (to Seattle), I stirred the ire of some readers by wondering if indeed "compassion is all we need." I worried that compassion might devolve into being nice. I asked if all the emphasis on compassion might, if not tempered by other virtues—courage, say—ill-equip children for the challenges of life.

Since then I have been thinking, in the unlikely event that some high-tech billionaire offers me big bucks to stage an event on a needed virtue, what would I choose? My answer: **integrity**.

*What is integrity?* Dictionaries define it as "the state of being whole, unimpaired, sound."

Doors provide an analogy. Some are hollow-core. When you knock on them, there's a hollow sound because there's nothing inside. Others, when knocked upon, sound solid because there's something solid inside. The inside and the outside in such doors are connected and whole. The solid sound indicates integrity, soundness, wholeness.

People aren't as simple as doors, and yet people who possess integrity have something solid inside. Their insides and outsides are of a piece. What you see is what you get.

I can think of several reasons why integrity is at risk these days. One factor eroding integrity is the quick-fix mentality. Most of life's important challenges are not susceptible to quick fixes.

A second thing putting integrity at risk is the conventional wisdom of an image-driven society that says, "It's all about perception." Or "perception is reality." This is another way of saying it's not what's on the inside, but only what's on the outside, that matters. This tends to turn us all into spinmeisters and makes the packaging more important than the product. Life becomes "impression management."

A third challenge to integrity is the frequent recourse to the victim mentality or its milder form, entitlement. As least in some circles, you get the moral high ground by alleging your status as a victim. But this depends on finding someone to blame because your life isn't as you wish. Integrity, on the other hand, involves taking responsibility for yourself.

What are the marks of a person who possesses integrity? Here's my Top 10:

1. What you see is what you get. Outer and inner are connected, parts of one whole.
2. A person who has basic integrity honors commitments and keeps promises. If they say they will be there, they are. If they promise to do something, they do it.
3. A person with integrity is truthful. You can trust what they tell you.
4. Consistency. Someone who has integrity isn't your new best friend one week and then next week doesn't seem to know you.
5. Integrity doesn't mean that a person never makes mistakes. But a person with integrity accepts responsibility for his or her own mistakes or failures and does what's in his or her power to put things right.
6. Related to No. 5, people with integrity are slow to blame others for their problems or frustrations. They aren't whiners.
7. People of integrity care about the work, the mission, or the product and about a job well done, and not just about what they personally will get out of it in terms of money, recognition or advancement.
8. While receptive to learning and change, people of integrity are skeptical of simple answers to complex problems, and not inclined toward fads or buzz words.
9. A person of integrity minds his or her own business. I don't mean isolation, I mean paying attention to your own responsibilities and work rather than freely inserting yourself into the responsibilities of another.
10. People with integrity know that they aren't perfect and that sometimes in this life it's not possible to avoid disappointing or hurting others. Because of this they are able to forgive and they recognize their own need for forgiveness.

If some philanthropist were to offer me money for a conference on integrity, I don't think I would take it. Integrity isn't something you get at a weekend conference. It's gained slowly, taught by example and experience, in families, schools and religious congregations and communities where it flourishes.

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