



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

Honesty: It's Importance in Change


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Change in Recovery

In recovery we only have to change one thing: **Everything!**

And even people with "grave emotional and mental disorders can change their lives, if they get **Honest**.

In this way, we begin to see how **Change** and **Honesty** are interconnected for us.




Change in Recovery

The goal of personal change is complete **freedom**. Its about becoming who we truly are, rather who we think we are supposed to be.

At the most fundamental level, sobriety affords us the first time to get to know ourselves – to stop avoiding, deflecting or hiding from life.

In sobriety, it is essential to get to know what we believe in so we can be true to our highest values & beliefs.



Connecting Honesty and Change

In order to do that we need to quit lying and all levels – which is a tall order.

Most of us lie when it would be just as easy to tell the truth.

It turns out that the qualities that are required for personal change, overlap with the qualities and reinforcing benefits of honesty.



Why Aren't we Honest?

- ❖ Were people honest in your family growing up?
- ❖ Were you punished or rewarded for lying?
- ❖ Were you punished or rewarded for telling the truth?
- ❖ Did you learn to lie to cover your addiction?

It turns out this matters a lot and helps us develop a personality that leans towards either deception or truth-telling.



False Self: Who We Think We Must Be

❖ If our early environment reinforced that love and belonging was conditional, we will do whatever we can to meet those conditions

❖ Who would you like me to be? What can I say/do to get your approval?

❖ Here, attachment needs supersede the value of honesty. Being connected to your own wants and desires gets smothered. You look outside yourself, rather than inside yourself, for direction.



We Need 3 Things to Change

- 1. Awareness:** is 'the ability to experience the world directly, without interpretation or preconceptions'.

This includes being connected to what we are thinking, feeling and wanting; what we are fearing and what we are wishing for.

We have to be present with ourselves, and with what life is showing us in that moment, rather than looking outside ourselves for permission, or to fit in, or to avoid conflict.



Autonomous change includes:

- 2. Spontaneity:** is the ability to exercise one's full options in moving between different parts of ourself – child, adult & parent ego states.

In other words, we can be flexible – go with the flow, change our expectations; overcome rigidity, [but not irresponsible/chaotic].

We are open and willing to try new things and bring a sense of joy for life to our experiences.



Autonomous change includes:

- 3. Intimacy:** is 'the free, uncensored expression of feelings and wants, without games or manipulation'.

It's about being open, authentic & vulnerable, "What you see is who I am."

It's about the willingness to take emotional risks to let others close and a desire to have deep and meaningful connections with others as the source of a good life and the foundation of solid recovery.




Radical Honesty

This means telling the truth about big and little things, and especially, when it exposes us as **vulnerable** and fallible human beings.

Many people develop a habit of lying while in their addiction – it becomes automatic, knee-jerk even.


Yet, honesty is critical to long term emotional sobriety and to knowing yourself and liking yourself. Telling the truth is a way to set yourself free.



Radical Honesty

Here is the overlap with growth:

1. It promotes **awareness** of our actions (we can't stay in denial or pretend we don't know).
2. It fosters intimate human connections. (**spontaneity**)
3. It leads to a truthful autobiography (getting to know who we really are). (**intimacy**)




Radical Honesty:

The most important benefit:

According to Dr. Anna Lemke, telling the truth is contagious, and might even prevent the development of future addictions. "**We are only as sick as our secrets.**"

Sharing our experiences gives us mastery over them.

It stimulates the parts of our brain responsible for future planning, emotional regulation, and delayed gratification.



Honesty and Personal Growth

"Consistent with the lived experience of people in recovery truth-telling may change the brain, allowing us to be more aware of our pleasure-pain balance and the mental processes driving compulsive overconsumption, and thereby change our behaviour."

Dr. Anne Lemke, Dopamine Nation, pg. 179



Questions for You

1. Did you have people early in life who modeled openness and authenticity?
2. Was there ever a sense of danger in telling the truth (i.e., it will get me in trouble).
3. Were there adults who were able to connect and be truly intimate with you?
4. What is one thing you would like to work on when it comes to being more open and honest?

