

# **Integrity**

**The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality**

**By: Dr. Henry Cloud**

## PART I: WHY INTEGRITY MATTERS

Integrity—more than simple honesty, it's the key to success. A person with integrity has the ability to pull everything together, to make it all happen no matter how challenging the circumstances. Drawing on experiences from his work, Dr. Henry Cloud, a clinical psychologist, leadership coach, corporate consultant and nationally syndicated radio host, shows how our character can keep us from achieving all we want to (or could) be.

In his book, *Integrity*, Dr. Cloud explores the six qualities of character that define integrity, and how people with integrity:

- Are able to connect with others and build trust
- Are oriented toward reality
- Finish well
- Embrace the negative
- Are oriented toward increase
- Have an understanding of the transcendent

Integrity is not something that you either have or don't, but instead is an exciting growth path that all of us can engage in and enjoy.

Dr. Cloud makes it clear that "integrity," as he uses the term, is much more than mere "honesty." Throughout the book he parses and elucidates these six essential qualities and character traits that lead to success in the business world. He describes character as it relates to relationships as well as the business world.

You will see how these character traits supersede gifts, talents and ability, and how the persons who have them succeed and the persons who don't, ultimately fail.

When talking with a wealthy businessman who is a personal friend, Dr. Cloud heard his friend comment on how he chooses to invest his money in businesses.

He said, "I did not invest in those businesses. I invested in the people. I never invest in businesses I don't know anything about, but I will invest in a person. If I know their character, their history, how they operate, what kind of judgment they have, what kinds of risks are acceptable to them, how

they execute, and things like that, and I know them well, I will invest. But I don't buy businesses I don't know anything about."

Dr. Cloud gives us his expanded definition of integrity as it applies to the business world:

"And, the origins of the word we can see in the French and Latin meanings of intact, integrate, integral and entirety. The concept means that the `whole thing is working well, undivided, integrated, intact and uncorrupted.' When we are talking about integrity, we are talking about being a whole person, an integrated person, with all of our different parts working well and delivering the functions that they were designed to deliver. It is about wholeness and effectiveness as people. It truly is `running on all cylinders.'"

The author offers a very clear and helpful metaphor for the type of impact that this kind of person of integrity has on the lives of those with whom she or he interacts. Dr. Cloud posits that each of us, as we move through the waters of life, leave behind a wake, like that left by ships as they pass through the ocean. There are two aspects to the "wake" that we leave behind - the tasks we have performed and the relationships we have built.

Dr. Cloud says, "We leave a wake of people behind us as we move through their lives and their organizations. . . So, we must ask ourselves, `What does that wake look like?' Are a lot of people out there water-skiing on the wake, smiling, having a great time for our having `moved through their lives'? Or are they are there bobbing for air, bleeding, and left wounded as shark bait?"

In the chapter on Building Trust Through Connections, Cloud offers this profound insight that helps us to understand the difference between those persons and companies that command loyalty and those that do not:

"The human heart will seek to be known, understood, and connected with above all else. If you do not connect, the ones you care about will find someone who will."

Applying this principle alone in most companies today would dramatically reduce the costs of employee theft, turnover, recruiting, retention and succession planning.

In the chapter on, "Trust through Vulnerability", Cloud talks about an early childhood experience he had with his mother that caused him to trust her

more deeply than he might otherwise have been able to do.

"I needed a model that was strong enough to depend on, but vulnerable enough to identify with. That combination is what made it work. In essence, it said, 'Hey, she is like me, in that she is afraid sometimes and feels like she can't do it. But, she does it anyway. She pushes forward. Her vulnerability is what made her power available to me.'"

In sharing *What People In Touch Look Like*, Dr. Cloud recounts an incident that happened on a retreat for CEO's, when a young "superstar" was given an opportunity to receive feedback from a more senior CEO.

"One of the more experienced guys looked up and said, 'Want some feedback?' He said it in a way that left you wondering whether he was going to give sage advice or rail at the young man for being out to lunch in some way. There was just no way to tell from his poker face. But I will never forget the young superstar's immediate response: 'By all means. Give me a gift.' He saw the feedback, whatever it was, as a gift because it could give him some reality that he did not know. I remember thinking, 'We will be watching this guy's accomplishments for a long time.'"

Cloud then ratchets up the significance of this insight by suggesting a challenging way for us to put this principle of inviting feedback to a practical test. "If you want to know your comfort level in this matter, think of going to the people you work with or are in close personal relationships with and give them 100 percent permission to be totally honest with you in answering the question: 'What is it like to be on the other end of me?'"

## **THE THREE ESSENTIALS**

People who become leaders, or really successful, tend to have three qualities. Number one, they have some set of competencies. Example: they know their field, their industry and their discipline. If you are Bill Gates, it helps to know something about the computer industry. In other words, *you can only fake it for so long. Get yourself in the library or wherever and master your craft.* Get good at what you do. A CEO has mastered a set of competencies in the same way. You just have to get good at what you do, period. There are no shortcuts. The second ability one must possess; they have to be an alliance builder. In other words they have to take their

competencies and what they do well and build alliances with others who have competencies and resources and form relationships that are mutually beneficial. Alliances are about creating leverage to take what you do to a multiple.

The third ingredient is: They have to have the character to not screw it up. But, often, we do not connect the dots with how integrity of character really works day to day, that the way to more profits is a shift in our own character makeup, or if we do, we often do not know where to begin. Nor do we know sometimes how to make the personal shifts that will make our relationships more fruitful.

### **The Character Problem: You've Seen It Happen**

“Making it” is more than just being competent and able to cut deals. It has a lot to do with who we are. But, exactly what does that mean? What is Character? How does it affect performance? How important is it? Most of the time, when we think of the word *integrity*, or *character*, we think of morals or ethics, not performance. We associate the topic with the catastrophes like Enron, Andersen, WorldCom, or the fall of individual superstars whose character has somehow gotten in the way. And certainly, there are those huge examples, from the top of business and government, all the way to the Church. There have been some huge ethical lapses that caused some major losses of not only individual careers, but entire companies and even confidence in the markets themselves. Not to mention the individuals who have been injured as well. Most people will now say “character counts.”

But, when they say that, often what they mean is that *character is a “safeguard” against bad things happening*. In other words, if people have good character, their ethics and integrity will be such that you can truly trust the numbers, they won't steal from you, lie to you, cheat you, or be duplicitous. They can be trusted. That kind of character is certainly bedrock, foundational, and without which we have nothing. As we have seen, when that is not there, everything can disappear. Morals and ethics undergird our entire system of business, relationships, government, finance, education, and even our very lives. Character is much more than trying to have a moral safeguard against “getting into trouble.”

Who a person is will ultimately determine if their brains, talents, competencies,

energy, effort, deal-making abilities and opportunities will succeed. It is one's makeup as a person, in ways much more than ethics alone, that takes people to success or enables them to sustain it if they ever achieve it. While character includes our usual understanding of ethics and integrity, it is much more than that as well. Another way of putting it is that ethical functioning is a part of character, but not all of it. And it certainly is not all of what affects whether someone is successful or becomes a good leader. There are many honest, ethical people of "integrity" who are not making it in some way. While we would say that they all were people of good "character," the reality is that their "personhood" was still preventing their talents and brains from accomplishing all that was in their potential. Some aspects to who they were as people that they had never seen as important to develop were keeping them from reaching the heights that all of the others investments they had made should have afforded them. While they met the criteria for having "integrity," they also left behind a trail of falling short in some key areas of performance that left them, as well as their stakeholders and the people who depend on them, wanting more.

They were unable to successfully:

- Gain the complete trust of the people they were leading, and capture their full hearts and following.
- See all of the realities that were right in front of them. They had blind spots regarding themselves, others, or even the markets, customers, projects, opportunities, or other external realities that kept them from reaching their goals.
- Work in a way that actually produced the outcomes that they should have produced, given their abilities and resources.
- Deal with problem people, negative situations, obstacles, failures, setbacks, and losses. Create growth in their organization, their people, themselves their profits and their industry.
- Transcend their own interests and give themselves to larger purposes, thus becoming part of a larger mission.

These kinds of issues, as we shall see, have little to do with IQ, talent, brains, education, training, or most of the other important components of success. Instead, they have to do with the other aspects of character

functioning that we pay way to little attention to in training people to be leaders and to be successful. *The most important tool ultimately is the person and his or her makeup, yet it seems to get the least amount of attention and work.* Mostly, we focus on professional skills and knowledge instead.

You have seen the character problem and if you are like most of us, have probably even lived it out to some degree yourself. You have experienced being on the other end of someone who needed to make some changes in these kinds of issues and have maybe even suffered the results of its not happening. But what you might not have seen, and what this lesson is about, is a way of thinking about what those issues are. We will look at a way of thinking about character and its components that if applied, can help you, those you work with, and your organization to avoid the three pitfalls that these issues cause:

1. Hitting a performance ceiling that is much lower than one's aptitude.
2. Hitting an obstacle or situation that derails you
3. Reaching great success only to self destructs and loses it all.

These are the three areas that character effects. Either someone is not reaching his full potential and is stuck at some level beneath his abilities, or some particular situation that he is not equipped to deal with does him in, or he does reach great heights and then something about his makeup brings him down. Most of the time, these three scenarios have little to do with the person. Our goal is to understand what the issues are so that we can resolve them and their effect in your life. But to do that, we need to get a more complete view of character and how it affects your outcomes in life. When people understand what these issues are and begin to grow in them, they are able to get to places they always thought possible, but could never quite attain.

## **CHARACTER, INTEGRITY, AND REALITY**

### **The Wake**

You can tell a lot about a ship as you look at its wake. If it is in a straight line, you get a feeling that the boat is steadily on course, and that the captain is not dozing at the wheel, or that an engine or a shaft is not somehow out of whack. But if it is wavering you begin to wonder. Also, if it is smooth and flat, you know something about the speed of the boat, and if it is steep, you can tell something about its drag. In other words, what the

wake looks like can tell you a lot about the boat itself. With people, the same thing is true. As a person goes through a company, *he or she leaves a wake behind as well*. And just as with a boat, there are always two sides to the wake that a leader or someone else leaves when moving through our lives or the life of an organization.

The two sides of the wake are:

1. The task
2. The relationships

When a person travels through a few years with an organization or with a partnership, or any other kind of working association, he leaves a “wake” behind in these two areas, *task* and *relationship*: What did he accomplish and how did he deal with people? And we can tell a lot about that person from the nature of the wake.

In terms of the task, what does the wake look like? Is it a wake of goals being reached; profits being made; growth of the business or the deal that the person was working on with you; the mission being accomplished; things getting completed; new ways of doing things being introduced and perfected; a stronger brand; a stronger reputation for the work and company; better systems and processes; cleaner operations; or, or is it a different kind of wake; unreached goals and projections; misfires; mission not accomplished; lack of completion; disorganization and chaos; inactivity and nothing happening; lack of focus; false starts; resources and money lost? And from the wake, which is the real performance and results, we can tell a lot about the person. Results *matter*. They are the stuff from which we are evaluated and for which we strive to bring dreams and plans into reality. When we look at results, the wake, we are really looking at *ourselves* and learning something about our character in the same way that the wake of a ship tells us a lot about the ship.

At the end of the day, we must look back and see if the wake of our work is profitable or not. If it isn't, it is time to ask ourselves some hard questions. The wake is the results we leave behind. *And the wake doesn't lie and it doesn't care about excuses*. It is what it is. No matter what we try to do to explain why, or to justify what the wake is, it still remains. It is what we leave behind and is our record.



On the other side of the wake are the relationships. Just as we leave the effects of our work behind in results, we leave the effects of our interactions with people behind in their hearts, minds, and souls. We leave a wake of people behind us as we move through their lives and their organizations. We leave a wake behind as we move through the lives of clients and partners. We leave a wake behind as we move through our relationships with vendors and other alliances, as well as our entire industry. So, we must look out over the transom and ask ourselves, "What does that wake look like?" Are a lot of people out there water-skiing on the wake, smiling, having a great time for our having "moved through their lives?" Or are they out there bobbing for air, bleeding, and left wounded as shark bait? In other words would they say that their experience with us has left them better off for our having "moved through their lives," or would they say that it has left them worse off?

Did they consider it a blessing that they were associated with you, or a curse? What is the nature of the wake? Are they smiling or reeling? In the people side, just as in the task side, there are results. Do they more trust after working with us? Are they more fulfilled as people? Have they grown as a result of being associated with you? Do they feel better about themselves, and working with others? Did they learn from you and feel lifted up and encouraged? Were they stretched and inspired to become more than they were before they worked with or for you? Did your relationship cause them to produce more? Or are they wounded; less trusting? Feeling put down, cheated, or manipulated? Disappointed, let down or lied to? Are they angry and just waiting for a chance to get even? Do they feel inferior, like a loser, or ashamed because of how you interacted with them? And the big question: "Would they want to do it again?"

### **A Different Definition of Character**

When we think of things like character or integrity, we often think of matters related to morals and ethics. We want to know that someone is "trustworthy" or "faithful." We want to be able not to have to audit their numbers. And if those things are in place, then we often put the character issue to rest and begin to talk about business or performance abilities, competencies and the like.

Yet, when you look at the real world, *there are dimensions to a person's*

*makeup that deeply affect the results, the wake, that they leave behind that definitely are germane to the task and yet often do not get the focus that they deserve. That leaves us with a need for a definition of “character” to work with as we take a look at the issues that affect performance.*

### **Character, Makeup, and Ability**

Character is *everything, depending on what demands are going to be put upon the design.* There are *realities that put demands on people that they have to meet in order to perform and not crash.* And the character of the person is what determines his or her ability to meet those reality demands, i.e. demands encountered in the real world. Thus, the definition that we will be working from for the purpose of this study is this:

### **Character = the ability to meet the demands of reality**

In business and in all of life, reality demands come across one’s path. And just as the “character” of the metal determines whether an airplane is going to succeed in that kind of heat or torque, a person’s character determines whether he or she will succeed in that situation. Their makeup, their integrity, will either be able to deliver or not. They will meet the demand, and succeed, leaving a wake of goals being reached and people fulfilled only if their character can meet the demand.

The demands that reality brings are many and varied. There are interpersonal demands, such as difficult people and relationships that one must negotiate and make work. Everyone at whatever level of business he or she has conducted has experienced that reality. And there is always the reality of getting people or a team of people to trust you enough to make it all come together.

On the task side, the reality demands are ever present also. Think of the realities that make demands on the metal of your character: You have put your lifeblood into a project for months, you get the first numbers back, and they are bad. What happens inside? Some people proactively wrap their arms around the situation, get energized, become clearheaded, get to work, and have all their capacities available to them. They turn it around. They meet the demand of the reality of bad numbers staring them in the face. They deliver. But other people go into a black hole, feel like a loser, get afraid, get mean, panic, stall out, or retreat. The bad numbers do them in.

Depending on your makeup, when those demands come, you will both meet their requirements and succeed; leaving a wake of results or your makeup will be overcome by them. For some, opportunity itself causes a problem. The risk is too scary, the pressure too great, and fear overcomes talent, brains, and abilities. The status quo is more comfortable, yet not really. Or you get too frustrated with the process, begin to take shortcuts, and screw it up in some way. *In the end, character always rules.*

The goal in this lesson is to take a look at those “personal issues” that make people successful to keep them from getting there. And to get specific about what elements of character are that make it all go one way or the other, and in doing so, to give you a helpful template by which to grow into the person who can deliver whatever reality asks you to do.

When you do that, *your brains, talents, and potential will intersect with reality and find themselves creating a wake that will be fulfilling to you, and enjoyable and profitable for those who are in it with you.* Since you have a big stake in your own success and results, you will be willing to make the investment that brings about change, no matter where you need to grow. As well as to help the ones you work with and depend on. That is the hope you can have. But to grow, we have to know what the character is, what it looks like, and ultimately what its relationship is to reality. Where does it intersect real life? That is the question that we will

## **Integrity**

Integrity is character, ethics, and morals. But it is also more, as even the *Oxford Dictionary* and the history of the word *integrity* itself tells us. Listen to the definitions as *Oxford Dictionary (or whoever) lists them*:

1. The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness. “He is known to be a man of integrity (This is the first aspect we talk about and need when thinking of character. But, there is more.

2. The state of being *whole* and *undivided*; “upholding territorial integrity and national sovereignty.”

3. The condition of being *unified*, *unimpaired* or *sound in construction*.

4. *Internal consistency* or *lack of corruption* in electronic data.

And, the origins of the word we can see in the French and Latin meanings of *intact*, *integrate*, *integral*, and *entirety*. The concept means that the “whole thing is working well, undivided, integrated, intact and uncorrupted.”

When we are talking about integrity, we are talking about being a whole person, an integrated person, with all of our different parts working well and delivering the functions that they were designed to deliver. It is about *wholeness* and *effectiveness* as people. It truly is “running on all cylinders.”

It is not enough for someone to be able to sell well, to have a good idea or a good business plan. A person should have good judgment also. It would not be enough to be aggressive, or a risk taker. The person would have to be able to finish things and be a closer, not leaving a bunch of good ideas undone, unexecuted, and scattered. He must have a “good wake” and that comes from having a *complete* toolbox.

### **Is it too much to ask?**

We all have strengths and weaknesses and we need to operate in those strong areas where we are talented and gifted. The idea here is about character that seems to *transcend* gifts, talents, and other ways of thinking about “strengths.” The character issues will affect the one or two things you do well forgetting any need to do the rest. Another way of saying this is that while you don’t need all the gifts that exist in the world, you do need all the aspects of character while you are putting your gifts to work.

The concept of integrity being about needing *wholeness* in all areas of character does not negate the reality that we do best when we are working within our gifts. What it does say is that if we do not have integrity of character, wholeness of character functioning in the ways that we will describe it, *then our ability to capitalize on our strengths will be severely affected.*

You still have to be able to “deliver the goods” no matter what you’re level of giftedness. So, let’s see what this character looks like that is able to deliver the goods, to “meet the demands of reality,” or, to be a person of “integrity.”

### **Character That Delivers in the Real World**

What I have tried to do is to take the dimensions of character functioning that I have seen affect people’s effectiveness the most and put them into a model that will help us look at ourselves and grow. I have taken aspects of character and put them into functions that tend to be different from each other, therefore discrete, and at the same time, related to each other, therefore integrated. If we have that combination, then we can focus on

specific aspects of our makeup and, at the same time, be focusing on all of our makeup and getting it working together. That is what brings results and effectiveness, i.e. when we can focus enough on specific issues to grow and as a result, get it all working together.

**Let's now look at what those aspects of character are:**

1. The ability to connect authentically (which leads to trust)
2. The ability to be oriented toward the truth (which leads to finding and operating in reality)
3. The ability to work in a way that gets results and finishes well (which leads to reaching goals, profits, or the mission)
4. The ability to embrace, engage and deal with the negative (which leads to ending problems, resolving them, or transforming them)
5. The ability to be oriented toward growth (which leads to increase)
6. The ability to be transcendent (which leads to enlargement of the bigger picture and oneself)

*If people are able to function well in these areas, the good wake is virtually inevitable.* Their gifts are able to come to fruition in the real world and get real results for meaningful purposes. And the people with whom we accomplish those, as well as the people for whom they accomplish those goals, are better off having been with them. Likewise, the ways in which we are incomplete in these things will have real effect on our fruitfulness both functionally as well as relationally. We will see it in the wake.

If you take a cursory view of them, you can see why seeing “integrity” as “integration of all the parts” is key, and why when we are not intact as a person, meaning that one or more of these areas is underdeveloped, amiss, or otherwise unavailable, we get into trouble. Strengths turn into weaknesses without the other parts of a person to balance them out. In fact, historically the word *diabolical* actually means “to compartmentalize.” Things go “bad” when they are out of balance and integration. The person of “integrity” is a person of balanced integration of all that character affords.

**The Gap**

The nature of the human race is that we never get to “completeness” or “maturity” in the fullest sense of the word. There is always room for improvement. There is the “gap” between where we are at any given moment, the true reality, and the ideal of the construct itself, ultimate

reality. The gap is our need and opportunity for growth. It is also the place where dysfunction occurs and the interruptions in our pursuits of goals and relationships. Remember, character equals the ability to meet the demands of reality. So to reach our goals and deliver in our relationships, we have to be able to negotiate those realities or they crush us, stop us, hurt us, or thwart us.

Besides our just not closing the gap between where we are and where we should be, a bigger problem can occur when we lack character integrity. The bigger problem is that we become dysfunctional in the truest sense of the word. Being dysfunctional is when an effort toward making something better makes it worse. That is when we are in trouble. And both a lack of integration and lack of development can do that.

### **Moving to Greater Realities: The Necessity for Growth in Integrity**

1. To see the nature of reality results, fruitfulness, and success. This means to face up to the fact that the nature of reality is that we can only deal with it to the level of our integrity of character. We must bend the knee to the necessity for personal development. To the degree that we do that, we are getting closer to whatever our goal is. To the degree that we avoid it, we are getting further away.

2. To understand the components of character itself. To diagnose a problem is a lot of the cure. To understand what the real issue is leads us to knowing what to do.

3. To work toward a full integration of character and wholeness as a person. Instead of compensating for incompleteness by asking our areas of strength to do things they were not designed to do, we can begin to gain the strength that real integrity provides.

### **What Kind of Force?**

One of the words that are close to character or integrity in meaning is the Hebrew word that is translated "virtue." If you trace its origins and meanings, one of the meanings is a "force." Someone of virtue is a force, and a force always leaves a result.

Likewise when you move through life, through your company or organization, through your career, and through your relationships, your character is going to be a "force." The question is "What kind of force is

it going to be? In many ways, as we shall see, it is up to you. The goal here is to develop these aspects of character that have such promise that a smart investor would write checks for millions to someone who possesses them, not even knowing a lot about the nature of the business itself.

## **PART II: CHARACTER DIMENSION ONE: ESTABLISHING TRUST BUILDING TRUST THROUGH CONNECTION**

Leaders have to be connected with his co-workers and employees, and that is a whole different dimension of character. What is that dimension?

### **Involvement in the “Other”**

People feel cared about, and trust is built, when they know that we have a genuine interest in knowing them, knowing about them, and having what we know matter. Connection happens when one person has a true emotional investment in the other, and the other person experiences that and it is returned. To do that requires the character that gets out of oneself long enough to know, experience, and value the “other.” It has to be done in a way the “other” can experience it.

### **What Builds Connection?**

Let’s look at some of the building blocks to connectedness.

### **Empathy**

Empathy is the ability to enter into another person’s experience and connect with it in such a way that you actually *experience* to some degree what the other person is experiencing. Empathy requires a few character components. First, there is the ability to feel and be what is referred to as softhearted. To be an empathic person means that you have overcome character detachment.

Second, it means that you have good boundaries. That means that when you feel what someone else is feeling, you also realize that it is *their* experience not yours. Boundaries are the component of character whereby we realize our separateness from another person. Third, and somewhat the sine qua non of empathy, is the ability to listen in a way that communicates understanding. When we listen, we hear. And it may be that we understand. *But, if we cannot communicate our listening in a way that lets the other person know we have truly understood, empathy*

*has not occurred.* There is no connection. True listening and understanding occurs only when the other person understands that you understand.

It happens like this:

They talk, you experience them, you share what you have heard and experienced about their experience, and then they experience you as having heard them. They then know you are “with them.” If, entering into another person’s reality validating it, and treating it with respect builds connection, what destroys it? The exact opposite: *invalidation*. Invalidation occurs when a person’s experience is all that exists to him or her. And he or she then moves to negate the other person’s experience, treating it as somehow not real or nonexistent. Connection and trust happen when one heart meets another. Invalidation wipes out the other heart and closes it off.

### **The Cost of Not Having a Connection Character**

In an organization, it is not uncommon for a person to find another key employee or two, or several, with whom he can share his experience. Discovering a sympathetic ear, he talks about how the other person is unethical, uncaring, self-centered, domineering, and incompetent; or in some other way impugns the person’s character and personhood. The human heart will seek to be known, understood, and connected with above all else. If you do not connect, the ones you care about will find someone who will.

### **Connecting Character That Meets the Demands of Reality**

In connecting with others in a way that makes them feel understood and valued is key to life and the basis of building trust and loyalty. From that base, everything else works. To do that requires the kind of character that is oriented toward others and makes proactive connections with them in a way that builds bonds.

## **BUILDING TRUST THROUGH EXTENDING FAVOR**

### **Trustworthy Character at the Next Level**

There is a much greater degree of trust in the person of more complete integrity. It is the kind of trust that *looks out for your interests, as well as his or her own*. In other words, you are not in it alone. There is someone who is not only looking out for what is good for him, but what is good for you too.



## **“For” and Not “Against”**

This kind of character has a basic stance that is, “for” the other person, i.e., neither “neutral” nor “against” them. It is an orientation that gets to the deepest aspects of character, as it reflects how much someone actually values people. True trust comes when we realize that another’s goodness, and being for my best interest, is not dependent on anything. It is just a part of that person’s integrity. It is *who that person is*, the kind of person who wants the best for others and will do whatever he or she can to bring that about. The person of integrity only goes “against” someone who is destroying something good, and then is only against the destruction and not the person himself.

## **A Person of Grace**

A “person of grace” is one who does the things “for” and not “against,” and treating others in the way that she would want to be treated. It makes for ultimate trust. People of grace leave others better off than how they found them, even when they were getting nothing in return.

## **Unmerited Help**

In leadership, this means that you are for your people to do well and to become all that they can be. It also means that you do things “for” them that are “unmerited” and help them get there. A leader with grace realizes that to reach the high standards she sets for her people may require that she provide coaching or training or encouragement or other resources to help them get there. They did not “earn” those things, and they are “unmerited.”

## **BUILDING TRUST THROUGH VULNERABILITY**

For you to build trust with people, you have to be vulnerable enough for them to identify with you, so that you are not so “unlike” them as to be alien. Research shows that models that are followed, which ultimately means trusted, are models that have the following characteristics:

1. They possess strength
2. They possess “likeness” to the ones following them.
3. They are warm
4. They are imperfect and coping models, as opposed to perfect ones.

These are all bridges of both power and vulnerability, having to do with

character.

- Being effective is experienced by others as strength.
- “Likeness” has to do with having points that we can identify with that make the person more like me than alien to me.
- “Warm” means that their basic feel toward others is positive and kind.
- “Imperfect” means that they don’t always get it right. They make mistakes and have faults. But, “coping” means that they face those directly and deal with them and overcome them.

The boss, leader, parent, or friend who can be vulnerable enough to show that he or she has felt similar things and has made it through or overcome in some way is the one who gains our trust.

### **Trust through Need**

Another powerful aspect of vulnerability that builds trust is the expression of need. When people feel needed, they perform at levels past the ones that come out of other requirements. To have a job or meet some quota is one thing. But to be performing because someone needs you takes you to levels that only the heart can push you to. We can only ultimately trust people who are being real with us. But part of that is transparency not just about facts, but about themselves as well. We need to see their vulnerabilities, and how they are feeling about things. We also need to know about their failures and times when they haven’t gotten it right. That helps us to follow them.

## **PART III: CHARACTER DIMENSION TWO: ORIENTED TOWARD TRUTH IN TOUCH WITH REALITY**

### **An Orientation toward Truth: 101**

“Telling the truth” is the first part of having an orientation toward truth. We all desire to be with honest people. Basic truthfulness and reality 101, as we are calling it here, is that people of good character are people who can be trusted to tell the truth and to give a representation of reality to others as best as they understand it. That is the foundation of all of life, from business, to government, to family, to commerce, to friendship. Without it, we don’t have much.

### **Truth 201 and Above**

Telling the truth is foundational, but not enough for success in love and life. A lot of honest, non-fudging people are not reaching their potential, and not getting to the levels of performance and success that their brains and talents should be taking them. And the reason is not that they are lying but that they miss parts of reality that are important to making things work. In the kind of successful character that we are talking about, the integrated or “whole” character, a grasp of truth is always present and increasing, which requires some specific traits.

For us to get real results in the real world, we must be in touch with what is, not what we wish things were or think things should be or are led by others to believe they are. High achievers face reality and deal with it. That is where profits are going to be made and where love is going to be found.

Reality 201 and higher is for those who are honest. They have the foundation and do not lie. But, they also have other character aspects to who they are that keep them from having blind spots way past lying.

## **WHAT PEOPLE IN TOUCH LOOK LIKE**

### **Seeking Reality**

People who have an orientation to the truth seek it out. They look for it and do everything they can to find it so that they know where to stand, what steps to take, etc. They basically see reality as their best ally so finding it becomes of utmost importance.

The opposite of actively seeking reality is avoidance. The person avoids finding out what is true may be doing that for a variety of character reasons. Basic pride, omnipotence, arrogance, grandiosity, or narcissism – this is the person who sees himself as above others, better than everyone else, knowing all things, and in touch with all reality.

The character who seeks reality about himself or herself has the courage to embrace whatever reality he finds. When we talk about “character that meets the demands of reality,” part of that is meeting the demand of the truth about ourselves. The promise of that pain is that when we do that, we can meet the demands of the external world even better. The one who is true about their self is the one who is most able to negotiate things outside their self as well.

### **The Observing Ego**

We have seen the value of getting reality feedback from others in order to get a clear picture of ourselves. That is essential. Another feedback mechanism that we need is feedback about ourselves from ourselves. This is our ability to monitor our own thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, feelings, abilities, choices, values, desires, talents, and the like. It is one thing to drive safely when you look in a rearview mirror and there is a policeman. That is external feedback. It is another thing to drive safely when you are out on the road by yourself. That is maturity.

Every human has faults, weaknesses, delusions, distortions, emotions that are not totally mature, lapses in judgment, and many other things that can cause problems. As we grow, those decrease as we mature, but we will always have some. That is inescapable.

But, the trouble that those things cause us is very escapable, to the degree that we can observe them. When we can see ourselves and what we are doing, we can always do something about it. But, not until we can see it, will we be able to do something about it. The observing ego is one of the big keys to making anything work. The ability to ask oneself “What am I doing here?” is a compass that will keep things on the right track.

### **“Neutralized Truth”**

Sometimes, when we are facing difficult things, the negative power, of the emotions involved overcome the ability to metabolize the reality itself. The extreme case would be something traumatic, whereby someone is overcome and unable to respond. But day to day, we all can identify with what happens when we face a hard piece of news at work and have to respond.

The characters that do well have an ability to “neutralize” hard truth, making it not overwhelming, but something to be looked at without all the awful and terrible emotion that goes along with it. They neutralize negative truth with kindness, or they just are not harsh in the delivery of it. It is about reality and not the person. They deal with the way things are and are able to see things in a way that is not personalized about them or anyone else. Maturity brings truth, care, and reality all together so that no aspect is left out.

### **Judgment and Emotional States**

In a very real way, we have more than one brain; or at least more than one

system in our brain. One of them “thinks” emotionally, and subjectively, and the other more logically and with reason and judgment. On a good

day, they are partners and work together. It would not be far off to say that they “uniform” each other and add to the decision making of each other. In a balanced character, they are good friends and work a little like a small committee.

If the emotional side becomes over powering, we can be vulnerable to making some really bad decisions. Put the power of some emotional states together with subjectivity of emotions themselves, and you can make some awful decisions if you do not have access to your rational, thinking self.

The other issue may be not that the emotions are just too strong, it may be that the thinking brain needs to be grown some too. It may be subject to “all or nothing” types of thinking, or “catastrophizing,” or may just not ever have had enough structured experiences to internalize that help calm the person down in times of intense emotions. In that case, the growth path is to begin to talk those strong feelings through with someone who can help the person to internalize some thought processes to serve as an internal calming agent for the emotional escalation.

No matter what the cause, the wake of people’s lives turns out much differently if they are not overcome by their emotional states and retain good judgment no matter what they are feeling.

### **Jekyll and Hyde**

Everyone knows someone who is referred to as Jekyll and Hyde. That usually means that they are like two totally different people. While that is the extreme, we can all relate somewhat to the concept; the technical term for it is splitting. What it means is that some aspect of us is not connecting with another, sometimes its polar opposite.

The most common and familiar form of this is the split between “good” and “bad.” It is the tendency for a person to experience themselves, others, or the world as either “all good” or “all bad.” When people see things in polarities, in either-or or black and white, for example, they miss a lot of reality. In failure or when they make a mistake, they see themselves as “all bad” and get thrown for a loop. Also, if anyone else frustrates them or

makes a mistake, they can do the same thing. If a project runs into a problem, it “turns sour.”

The mature character, however, does not do that. She sees the world in what psychologists refer to as whole representations. In other words, when she looks at a person, even one who has frustrated her, she sees that person as the “whole” of who they are and not just that mistake. So she sees someone’s strengths as well.

For mature functioning, we cannot operate well in seeing the world in either-or terms. It is like trying to play tennis with only a forehand and not a backhand. There are a lot of shots you cannot get to. It is frustrating to work with or to be in a relationship with someone who cannot tolerate “gray” or any degree of complexity that challenges their rigid thinking.

Resolving conflict is more than difficult, as a resolution usually requires an ability to see and work with truth from the other side and integrate it into yours, finding a solution that transcends either polarity.

### **Seeing It Differently: The Ability to Assimilate and Accommodate**

The process, called assimilation and accommodation, means someone has graduated past childhood levels of information processing and can adapt to reality and make external reality their own. I will repeat that for emphasis: it is the ability to make external reality one’s own reality. When you think about it, this is pretty huge. It is a good thing for your view of the world to be the real one. If it is not, you lose a lot of functioning. To change, someone first gave you new information. If you are open, you take the new information in. That is assimilation, the taking in of new information.

The second step is accommodation, which means that you accommodate the new information into your view of the world, in the way you accommodate a new member of your family. You make room for him, or her, and the family has changed. So it is with new information the map of the world changes. You accommodate the information and change your view. Not only that, you see the world “accurately.” Immature characters or nonintegrated characters ward off new information for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is arrogance, like a know-it-all character. Sometimes it is pride, like and “I don’t want to admit I am wrong” character. Or it could be

the anxiety and fear of having to adapt to new realities. To live in a world that is certain, albeit inaccurate, is more secure. To give up false security for reality is for the more mature, and strong of heart.

Cognitive and emotional flexibility is the key for fluid performance and negotiating reality. This requires integrating one's gears, biases, judgments, history, pride, arrogance, paranoia, insecurity, laziness, and a lot of other things that it means to be a human. That is what integrated characters do, though. They do the work that it takes to mature, and as a result they are able to "meet the demands of reality" in their personal lives as well as their professional lives. The ones who don't accommodate their view of the world to what the world really is cannot meet a lot of reality's requests of them to perform.

There are a few things like the ability to say "Oh, now I see." It ensures that one is getting closer every day to seeing what reality is, in oneself, others, and the world around one. If people can do that, their ability to meet whatever that real world demands of them goes up exponentially. And their wake of relationships and goals met is much, much different from that if they are continuing in their own world.

## **PART IV: CHARACTER DIMENSION THREE: GETTING RESULTS**

### **FINISHING WELL**

A lot of people know the "what" of the work. They know the facts, the processes, what to do, and even how to do the work itself. They know as much or more, about it than others. But, they do not produce impressive results. They are not the huge performers. You may even have wondered about yourself as well.

What is the missing ingredient? What could you be doing differently to make it work? Why do the ones who do better do better? There are "ways" that high producers, those who get results, operate. There are patterns to the ways that they behave, think, and relate that they tend to have in common. And, just like everything else we have seen so far, these have more to do with the ways they are "glued together" as people than "what they know." It has to do with the character that meets the demands of reality. People who are constructed in a certain way tend to get more results and work in different ways from those who just "work hard."

## **Know Who You Are**

People who do best in life have a well-defined identity on a number of fronts. They are secure in their boundaries, they know what they like and don't like what they believe in and value and they love and hate the right things. They are not wishy-washy and what psychologists call identity diffused, wondering who they are or what they are about, or thinking that they are everything. You get a good definition of who they are just from being around them.

Part of that distinct, discrete identity is in knowing what they are good at and what they are not, and they live in their area of strengths and talents and do not spend much time thinking that they are something they are not. In that way, not only do they work hard, but when they are working, they are working on things that have a chance of succeeding. But, for this to happen, the person has to have character integration around the areas of strengths, gifts, and talents. First of all, *they have to be in touch with those things.*

To find who one truly is usually requires experimenting and risk taking, and if people are afraid of failure, for example, they stay in their comfort zone and never step out and try anything new. That is where character issues get in the way of identity formation. A person who lives life according to his fears is always limited in his identity, because he cannot step out to find out, what is the real him; and what isn't. This kind of character and identity confidence is a paradox of humility. Upon first glance, the confidence "I am good at this" person is not what we think of as the picture of "humble." But, at the same time, because these people are also certain about who they are not, and what they are not good at, they do not come across as grandiose, just confident. Humility is not self-deprecating, but real and honest. When someone is who he or she really is and does not act as if he or she is more than he is, that is not arrogance, but secure identity. Out of that security, competent action flows and results happen.

## **Ready, Aim, Fire**

Every undertaking has a process with various components. You can break the process down in many ways and stages, but on that I find simple and that really reveals character is the components of **ready, aim, fire**. Results more often come when all of these stages have been added to the process, and not skipped; being ready means that someone is prepared, and able.



You can have a great opportunity come along, and if you jump in unprepared, or unable to complete it for whatever reason, you will fail. If an individual's character is impulsive, then getting ready or prepared or up to the undertaking is not usually in the cards. Their impulsive natures lead them into either half-brained ventures or good ventures for which they are unprepared.

When you look at the truly successful people over the long term, they do not make impulsive, rash decisions. They can wait, plan, and look at all angles. "Aim" has to do with focus. It has to do with purposeful, goal oriented action that knows where the energy and resources are being spent and therefore spent well. A lot of people spend a lot of energy working, but their character is so scattered that they never focus on particular goals and outcomes and keep on track to get there. Reality is that time, energy and resources are finite. Focus is about directing those in a way in which enough of each is given so that things happen.

The last of the three, fire, means that the person is actually able to pull the trigger. She can, after getting ready and getting focused, go for it. She is not risk-averse, if the risk makes the balance, integration, and order here is the key. Ready, Aim, Fire in concert is a mature person.

### **Willing to Make Hard Calls**

To accomplish things, hard decisions are going to have to be made that have adverse effects on people. If you are not in the business of delivering lottery winnings to people, then probably your work is going to involve some hard calls that people are not going to like. And if you are going to deliver results, then the greater those results, and the bigger the position you are in, the harder the calls become.

In some senses, the degree of responsibility, which really is what success is, that someone rises to rests upon their ability and courage to make the difficult calls. And that is not a brains issue, but a character issue. The fortitude to take the heat, the criticism, the rejection, the backs turning on you and maybe never forgiving you for doing what needs to be done, is the issue.

### **Somehow Finds a Way**

**Things never work. When they don't, that is the time to make them**

**work. Then, if you do, they work.**

The ability to keep going when we hit an obstacle, believe that there is a way to get it done, and keep going until we find it is one of the most important character abilities that we can ever develop. It is one of the most important aspects of character that leads to success. Perseverance takes courage, stamina, emotional reserves, judgment, creativity, and other aspects of character to do. But, without it, great things just do not happen. People fold every time they hit a roadblock. They get discouraged and are controlled from the outside, instead of from the inside.

### **Loses Well**

People's ability to make something work has everything to do with their ability to let go of something that does not work, grieve it, and move on. If something is lost and cannot be fixed, then it is time to wave the white flag and surrender, let it go, and make it something in the past. There is a reason why some people are able to lose and come back, and others stay stuck. They can't surrender and face the feelings and meaning of some loss, so they hang on to something that is dead. The big idea that successful people always have the character to live out is: Cut your losses and move on.

The next aspect of losing well is to look back after you let go. After the hope for something to work is relinquished and the defeat is embraced, the reasons for the loss are examined; the same kind, then the loss will not have to be repeated. To sit with failure and loss, and understand it, process it, and grieve it before going on, takes depth of character. It takes a well of emotional resources that can fuel the soul and spirit while one is doing that kind of work. The empty person, needing the next manic "fix" of excitement and optimism, cannot wait. She has to jump in. The mature one carries the optimism inside and knows there will be another day, but only after she has fully lived this one. That way, this day won't have to be lived again.

### **Losing When You Haven't Lost: Losing 501**

To let go of something that isn't working is a sine qua non of healthy people and high performers, as we have seen. But, that is entry level to the field of successful living and achieving. The high performers go a step further. They let go of things that are working, if they are not the best things. What the means is that they are able to let go of the things that take up, time,

energy and resources that may be good, and even profitable, but are keeping them from the best things. The good is the enemy of the best. Shedding one's skin to make room for the new one is a good practice. You can't have both, and often, underneath the old one is a bright and shiny new one ready for the new season.

### **More Than Working Hard**

If fears, narcissism, pride, emotional ties, emotional and spiritual emptiness, or other character issues are in the mix, then the work is going to be mixed up with the fruits of those issues, instead of the fruits of labor. The wake will be one where goals were not reached, the mission and purposes sacrificed to the altar of personal immaturity. That is why success and fruitfulness depend as much upon focusing on the, "who" you are as much as the "what" of the work you do. Invest in your character, and it will give you the work itself. You can't do the latter without the former.

## **PART V: CHARACTER DIMENSION FOUR: EMBRACING THE NEGATIVE**

### **Eating Problems for Breakfast**

Orienting oneself to the intellectually understanding that life is about problems is one thing. Being equipped to deal with them and resolve them is quite another. This is one reality that requires mature equipment, very complete equipment if done well. It is only the equipment of character that is able to meet the demands of negative realities and transform them into all things profitable. What are the aspects of character that enable a person to "meet the demands of negative reality," resolve them, and produce good fruit?

### **Does Not Avoid the Elephant in the Living Room**

Our look at character is twofold: First, integrated character does not avoid negatives, but does the opposite – actively seeks them out to resolve them. Second, integrated character does not see facing negatives only as something painful, but as an opportunity to make things better and get to a good place. As a result of the character abilities, successful people face into embracing problems and negative reality. The equipment they carry inside allows them to do. And part of it is this mind-set and attitude that facing it is going to be a good thing in the end, not a bad thing. But that has everything to do with a person's past experience. I have been amazed at how talented and competent individuals will allow their careers and relationships to be stalled or even destroyed by avoiding the negative

realities that make them uncomfortable.

### **Recoverability**

Integrated characters are able to recover motivation, hope, judgment, clear thinking, drive, proactively, and the other faculties needed to move something forward after something bad happens. The negative news or event does not sideline them for too long. It is not that they are in denial, and avoid the problem, or doing the postmortem. It is the opposite, that they have the resources to face into it quickly but without the kinds of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses that hamper or make impossible meeting the demands of reality.

### **Separate from Results**

One of the abilities that make someone able to lean into the negatives, face them, and recover is to be separate from the problem or the negative outcomes. Secure identity is about who a person is, not what he does or what his results are. When someone's identity is tied to his outcomes, he or she doesn't exist in a certain way; they are what "happens"; so, if things are going well, they are well. But if things don't go well and the outcomes are bad, they are not well at all. One of the key distinctive elements of an intact character is "differentiation." It denotes the degree to which a person is who he or she is apart from others and from all things external. The identity is intact, so they do not need external performance, approval, image, symbols, riches, organizations or affiliations, and the like to know who they are or to regulate how they feel. The key in dealing with negatives allows a person to deal with the problem, or the result, without becoming a part of the problem and being infected by the issue.

### **Ownership**

It is not enough for the integrated character to be seen as "having followed orders" if the ship sinks or the company is not profitable or his or her child is flunking out of school. Integrated characters want good fruit. They want things to work and they take ownership of the results as well as their own performance. On the surface, this may seem to contradict what we saw earlier, about being separate from results, but it doesn't. You can remain separate in terms of what the results mean about you and whether you over-identify with them with them.

Successful people do not blame the outside world for their lack of success

in any given venture or relationship. They put their arms around the results and ask themselves, “OK, given this market, or given the cards I have been dealt, or given who this person is, what can I do to make it work?” They see themselves as actors and not those who are acted upon or whose script is written by someone else with a plotline that is going to take them to a crummy ending that they have no control over.

### **The Underlying Sickness**

Why would someone choose to be “performance crippled,” instead of being empowered? A few things make up the underlying sickness to blame. The first is the worst sickness of all: the “preservation of the “good self,” or the wish to see oneself as “all good” or flawless or perfect. It is one of the sickest traits that we can have. Perhaps they were put down as children, abused, made to be the container of all the badness in the world by a “Blamey” parent. They have a “bad self” picture from long ago that they are trying to stay away from by never making a mistake, or being seen as making a mistake. The problem is that they have sought the wrong path to deal with the issue. Their way to overcome shame and the “bad self” is to perform well. But that never works.

The cure is always to find acceptance and love in one’s weakness and failure, and therefore discover that you are not what you do, but who you are. When we are loved for who we are, not for what we do, then we have a character based on being and not doing. That is where the contrast between “human being” and “human doing” comes from. When people are accepted in their failures and find that their imperfect selves are loveable, they are free to own their imperfections and improve. So to have an integrated, strong character, integrate the “bad self” and the shame with the rest of who you are by talking about those parts of you with people who accept you, instead of trying to hide and overcome them by being perfect or ideal. Then, you will be free to reach your potential.

### **Confronts Productively**

One of the most important aspects of character in life, without question is one’s ability to confront. It is true that you can get what you tolerate. If the nature of reality is that there are always problems, if you do not confront them and instead tolerate them, then problems are what you will have. I have never met or observed a person with a truly whole successful wake who did not confront well. That is why say that this is one of the areas

where character integration is so important. If you fail to confront, you lose. But if you confront poorly, you will also lose. So, you must confront, but confront well. That means that the truth-telling side of your character must be integrated with the loving and caring side of your character. When you show up to deal with a problem, you must bring both of them together. Confront the problem, but in a way that preserves the relationship and the person. If you err on either side, the wake will be affected.

Confrontation does not have to be adversarial. It merely means that we are going to “face this issue together instead of putting our heads in the sand and ignoring it.” I like the phrase “to turn your face toward” as the meaning of confront. It does not mean a military destruction of the other side, but a coming together of two people facing some problem and finding a solution that brings it all together. Poor confronters turn things adversarial too easily and quickly. It is experienced as me versus you, or us versus them, as opposed to this way: You and I versus the problem.

### **Lets the Bad Stuff Go**

People who have not ever really faced their own misdeeds, owned their own mistakes toward others, and received forgiveness and made amends rarely have forgiveness toward others. They still think they are morally superior and lord their superiority over the ones who fail them in some real or imagined way. But, if they have been honest about their own failures been accepted for those, then they are more humble and able to forgive other imperfect people like themselves. Confront well, and when people own it and the problem is resolved, let it go. Do not carry it forward, thereby keeping old injuries alive. The future is to be gained, not lost all over again.

### **The Best Way to Solve a Problem**

Confronting and solving problems is a hallmark of the successful character. But, integrated characters have an equally important function regarding problems as well. In fact, it is the best way to solve a problem. Integrated characters have a great immune system against getting into bad situations. They sense them early on, and if something smells wrong, or not good enough, they just say no. They do not agree to things that do not fit their criteria, their values, their purposes, or that have too many negatives of the types of negatives that they do not want to deal with. In the section on getting results we talked about the due diligence required before jumping into something, and being ready. This is the other side of that quality, after

the due diligence is done, and something is found lacking, one has the character ability to say, "No!"

To say no means that we have to be strong enough to disappoint some people, and also to give up some things that we might want because they have too many negatives that go along with them. People who have become immune to pain, for example, sometimes take on problematic

deals and suffer the consequences because they do not have the integrated character to pay attention to their gut, which says, "I don't want that!" They have been so numb for so long that they just sign up for more pain and then suffer the consequences. It is as if they have learned to believe that pain is just part of their lot and they don't even much notice it until it is too late. Integration says that our character will not allow one part of us to do something that another part of us is not cool with. If some desire violates your values, for example, it is not an integrated move, and the mature person will say no, even if that means loss. But, the good thing is that it means loss of something else that is more important to lose: the problems that going forward would have brought you. Have the courage to say no when it is not right.

### **No Pain, No Gain**

To face negative things is hard. Otherwise, everyone would do it. To change is hard work, otherwise everyone would grow.

Character that is mature knows a basic reality and has made it a part of itself: there is no such thing as a free lunch, and whatever has value is going to require hurt in order to possess. Try to name one thing in life that is of value that you do not have to suffer something in order to have. There is nothing. Even the best things in life that are free, as we say, such as love, can have big price tags in order to possess. Self-denial, sacrifice, giving, delay of gratification, repentance, forgiveness, swallowing pride and ego, are all among the price tags of making love work. But in the end it is always worth it. With people of character, when facing a negative, embrace it. They do the hard work first. They do the hard work before going on the vacation. Then as a result of doing the hard stuff first, embracing the negative and dealing with it, in themselves or someone else, they are ready for things to be easy for a long time.

## **PART VI: CHARACTER DIMENSION FIVE: ORIENTED TOWARD**

## **INCREASE**

### **GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME**

#### **The Drive to Grow**

The more we get into this thing called character, the more we see that integration and wholeness is paramount. It all goes together, and when we are stuck in one, it will certainly affect the other. Integrity itself as a construct is really about the integrated functioning of all aspects of character. They are interdependent, and it is difficult to have one really working without the others. But, as integrated as they are, there is still a difference in the creation of new capacities and new skills and new areas of fruitfulness. To meet the total demands of reality, we must be growing and always increasing our abilities, skills, and capacities, in every area of life. There has to be a force inside that literally drives us to want and find “more.” Integrated characters have this drive inside. It is as natural to them as breathing. Everything they put their hearts and minds to is infused with this drive, to make it better and careers grow, and their personhood grows; the groups and departments that they belong to grow. They can’t help it. It is a drive.

#### **The Normal Path—Use Creates Growth**

If something is alive, it is doing two things, simultaneously. It is growing and dying. Depending on where it is in its life cycle, one of these processes is probably more dominant, or at least more visible, than the other. What we also know is that the relationship between those two processes is greatly affected by several factors. One of them is use. The more we use something, the more it is growing and increasing in capacity and either reversing the death process or at least slowing it down. The first principle of growth is this; what is put to use, grows. But unlike a plant that is placed in the soil to grow by someone else, people are very different, and this is where character becomes everything: People do not get put to use by others. They have to invest themselves. Growth is something that someone has to engage in willingly. It cannot be imposed on someone, and it can also be resisted. So, again, it has to do with the makeup of the person, the character.

#### **The Drive**

The drive is an important part of your character that pushes you to excel in



your ventures. Causing you to challenge yourself to learn more and improve on the things you have accomplished. It's like a hunger that never ends. There are many individuals and organizations that do not experience that drive and have gone into a dull state of "maintaining." They are just continuing to be the way they are, day after day. They go about their careers the same way, doing what they have always done, following the conveyor belt of doing only what is required. You could almost peer into their lives in the same activity year after year and see no difference. The reasons are manifold. But, they all fall into a few categories. There are ways in which their desire to grow has been injured or stifled. There are ways in which they have not had the ingredients that are necessary for growth. And there are ways that they have not been pushed to have to grow. All of these have incredible implications for our own character and growth in the areas where they apply.

### **Buried, Hurt, or Stifled Hunger for Growth**

The invisible world of character is where the visible world always originates. Character is about experience, and while he may be drifting, he is not without hunger. But, his experience has become his character, his makeup. Here's what happens. Deep within, when he has a fantasy of doing something or a dream, or just a thought, "wouldn't it be nice," or "that's interesting," that desire doesn't make it far. It is instantly squelched, put down, criticized, and killed off by the critical voice of his early experience, which is now part of his own makeup. It is now he who keeps himself imprisoned. We do not hear that, for the most part. We just see the wake of his stuck life, not alive with new, stretching experiences. For someone's character to grow, it has to be free from internal attack. Growth requires taking steps into uncharted territory. For people to integrate new capacities or internalize new skills from the outside, they have to try new things. It is imperative for you to challenge and overcome the experiences you have had which stifle your drive to grow. If you do that, your abilities can find the outside world.

### **Good and Bad Hunger for More**

The character who truly produces increase is one who is creating from an outgrowth of real passion and investment in things that he or she cares about from the heart. The drive they have to get "more" connected to their life drive, and grounded in aspects of who they are that are real. It is not just a means to be someone people are not. It is the opposite. It is an

expression of who they are becoming. It is real, and because of that, it has life, force, and is sustainable.

### **Gambling, and Taking Risks**

Successful characters take “risks” in other people’s minds, and not really so much in their own. Other people look at them and see them investing, or beginning a business, or undertaking some venture, or going out on their own, and think of that as taking a lot of risk. What it really means is that they have put themselves in the position of responsibility. If there is not a good outcome, it will rest on their shoulders. Risk taking is merely taking a move away from structured security where someone else has to worry about the results. Growth requires risks. To grow, you must take the step to the next level past where you are comfortable. But risk that creates growth is the kind that is natural expression of what someone has already become not some foolish leap into oblivion. That is a roll of the dice and more akin to a gamble than a risk.

### **The Necessary Ingredients**

For someone to grow there has to be a connection to outside sources of energy. Who is pushing you to grow? Who is supporting you to grow? Who is pushing you past the level at which you already are? Where is the encouragement coming from?

**The number one reason for lack of growth in people’s lives, I have observed, is the absence of joining forces outside themselves who push them to grow.**

But if they enlist a coach, join a group; get a counselor, a community of growth, or some outside push, then the growth begins to happen. It is the coach pushing us to greater heights, the sales manager motivating you to something you can’t do, the Weight Watchers group motivating you to try a new course. On the other hand, if it is all self-motivation, then decay, decline, and dying can take over, especially when we hit the stuck places where more is required that we don’t have. But, if there is fuel from the outside, we are pushed further than we are able. Second, we need the structure of the template. This is like the lattice for a plant. It shapes the energy in a particular direction. It is the structure and path of growth. If you are going to grow in some area, you need to have a direction or a path that is going to guide that to a form.

### **Submission to the Structures**

Given all of that, the characters who grow submit themselves to experiences of both outside energy sources and templates of information and structure that mold the direction of their growth. The number one indicator that I have found reveals a person's character is oriented toward growth is the spending of two concrete resources: *time* and *money*. You can always get a picture of people's (or even a company's) drive to grow by looking at their calendar and their checkbook. If they are driven to grow, then they spend these two valuable commodities in becoming "more."

### **Submission to Someone Further Down the Road**

Another aspect of growth characters is the ability to seek out and submit to "mentors," or people who are further down the road. They can take input, and modeling, and are not ashamed to ask for it. The ones who "know it all" or are somehow above asking or afraid to ask for help are the ones who hit the ceiling. The relevant character aspects here have to do with the resistance to being known as one truly is. To be mentored means that we allow someone to look at all we are doing, our practices, our ignorance, our lack of ability, and to speak into that. That takes the ability to be vulnerable and open. Growers will tell you that they have subjected themselves to tough coaches and mentors, endured the discomfort, and gained immensely through the process. They have to leave their need for comfort and happy talk at the door.

### **Values the Present, Doesn't Want to Stay There**

The mature character loves today. She loves what today has accomplished. Her soul is satisfied when she looks at the results. She is grateful for the accomplishment, proud of it, and grateful to all of those who helped bring it about. She thanks them, rewards them, and celebrates with them. The process is as important as the goal. Then, tomorrow, she will strive for more.

### **Subject Themselves to Their Inability**

Remember people who grow jump in over their head. They try things that they cannot do, and then stretch to become able to do what they are attempting. They take on challenges that ask them to become more than they have been or done before. Then the pressures of those demands call for them to become more in order to meet them. The bar is raised, and they

have to jump higher.

### **You will not grow without attempting things you are unable to do.**

Going into new areas of endeavor, new markets, new positions, new responsibilities, new skills, are all aspects of growth; and what is interesting about characters that grow in this way is their continual placement of themselves into the thick air of things never before attempted. They have the Indiana Jones experience that says, "I'm making this up as I go along."

### **Rest**

Another character aspect related to the ability to celebrate mentioned above is the ability to rest and recreate. The idea of a sabbatical has science behind it; in the same way, integrated people who have drive, but are not "driven" are able to "Sabbath" and recreate. The idea of a Sabbath is a period of time (twenty-four hours weekly) where you are not producing anything. Rest means not producing. When something is not producing, it is regenerating. And while that is happening, good things are occurring that get it ready for the next production cycle. Fields need to lie fallow to restore fertility for future harvests.

### **Helps Others Develop More**

What I find about those who grow in their own lives is that they are also always investing in the growth of others. They not only subject themselves to mentors and people further down the road than they are, but they are also the ones further down the road for someone else. They give away what they possess and invest in others becoming more.

### **Integration Reveals Itself**

Our view of character has been based on the importance of integration at the macro level. The big picture is where all the aspects of character are whole and come together to make for a person who is "all together." But in the micro level of this aspect, integration is a telltale sign of character as well. The person who is doing it well is growing not in just one area of life, but all of them. That is the way that you know it is character and not compensation.

## **PART VII: CHARACTER DIMENSION SIX: ORIENTED TOWARD**

## **TRANSCENDENCE**

### **WHEN YOU'RE SMALL, YOU'RE BIGGER**

Whether or not we believe in gravity, for example, it exists. It is bigger than we are. It transcends us. And, like the lighthouse, it invites us to adjust our course to its reality. If we do we fit into its reality and do well. We can even use it to our advantage. Engineers study it and find ways to go with it, designing planes that work within it and the other laws of physics, and we benefit. But, if they ignore those transcendent laws, the planes go down. We can push the limits all we want, thinking they will move, but ultimately we will bow to them.

**To live and flourish, we must bow to the things larger than us.**

Seems like common sense, right? And that is where character enters the scene and will determine everything about a person's wake.

### **The Big Question**

As a psychologist, I would have to say that one question hovers above all other in importance for a person's functioning in life. It is the question "Are you God, or not?" The way that a person answers that one determines everything else that we have been talking about in character and functioning. Most people will answer the question correctly. "Of course I am not God," they say. But, if you follow them around, they spend the rest of the time acting as if they are. They live as if they are the center of the universe and that everything and everyone exist to serve them and their purposes. They put all their efforts into building their own kingdom, whether that is their household, a company, their relationships, or their interests. They feel as if it all revolves around them, and that the lighthouse should move. They experience themselves as the center of the universe.

The opposite of this kind of self-centeredness can be described in a lot of different ways. I like to think of it as the quality of "transcendence." It is the person who has gotten beyond, above, or transcended ordinary human selfishness and self-centeredness and lives in a very different reality from thinking life revolves around him or her. She realizes that there are things much bigger than her, and that her existence is really not just about her and her interests, but ultimately about the things, joining them, serving them, obeying them, and finding her role in the big picture. Then, as a

result, she ultimately becomes a part of them and finds meaning much larger than a life that is just about her. Life is about things that transcend her.

### **Bigger Than Me**

The big things, not ourselves, are the things that make us big. As we join them, we become larger. The paradox is that to join things bigger than us, we have to humble ourselves and become “smaller,” in a sense. When we realize that we are smaller than the transcendent things, and exist for them and not them for us, we grow into greatness. The greatest people are the ones who have not sought greatness, but served greatly the causes, values and missions that were much bigger than them. And by joining and serving those, we see greatness emerge.

### **Things That Are Bigger**

So what are the “bigger things”? What are the lighthouses? There are many, some of which are universally accepted, and some we choose to value. My purpose here is not to choose for you what the bigger things worth “bowing” to care for you. My purpose here is for us to look at the character trait for being able to bow to them, and being willing to bow to them, more than defining what those things are. The things that one of us holds transcendent may not be as big for someone else, and vice versa. But, at the same time, most of the civilized world agrees on some universals and absolutes that we should bow to, and we can learn from them.

Anything of value can be brought down by enough individuals who do not bow to the larger things. A family can be brought down by a spouse who does not bow to the bigger issue of faithfulness, rather than his own immediate gratification in an affair. A business can be brought down by not bowing down to the bigger picture of the customers’ needs or the employees’, or their values. As Jim Collins made clear in *Built to Last*, it is the companies that live out their values who win in the long run. This is true about individuals as well. Character always wins.

### **Awareness**

The first aspect of character that affects transcendence is awareness. The ones who live for the bigger things know that bigger exists. They are aware. The ones who don’t are just on autopilot, mainly driven by their hungers, passions, and desires for gratification. In Freudian terms, they are guided

by their instinctual impulses, looking for a socially acceptable way to feed their selves; but, fortunately, as we all know, a lot of people have transcended that animal-like state. They have become “aware” or enlightened that there are bigger things than themselves and their appetites.

The people who truly emerge from themselves do that by getting out of themselves and investing themselves in things larger. For some that is a faith, for others a cause or service, a mission, or just values that cause them to pour themselves out to others in greater and more diverse ways. As they do, they are enlarged. Look around your office and see the ones who give time and effort to a cause, versus the ones who can only look at their portfolio numbers over and over. Who do you want to be?

### **Self-Denial, Self-Correction, and the Ability to Adjust**

The real indicator of this kind of character is whether it shows up in behavior. It is one thing to hold to values or principles of great significance, but it is a totally different matter to have those appear on the easel of life. Just as “faith without works is dead,” values without visible expression of those in time and space are not worth much more than an intellectual exercise and do little to effect the wake of someone’s life. If we want to know what we value, then we have to look at how we spend our time, money, energy, etc. In other words, where our treasure is, there our heart is also. So it begins with investment. It doesn’t begin with just saying we care about something. It has to be exercised, and internalized. But like all internalizations or growth, the structure of the patterns have to be exercised first, both to wean oneself from the pull of the shallow existence that is comfortable, as well as find the realization of the fulfillment of the deeper life.

People who develop this kind of transformation and sustain it do it with a structured approach, at least in the beginning. They take a class, get a spiritual director or mentor, volunteer in an organization, join a growth group, or find some other path that has a structure to it. When they do that, and it includes the elements of awareness, a template, stretching experiences, practice, correction, feedback, and the other elements of growth we talked about in the last section, it slowly becomes their own. Then they might morph the structures to fit their own style or needs or even launch out into something new. But, first, they submit to some structured

growth path to stretch their selves and mold this aspect of their being.

The more that they adapt and submit themselves to that structure, the more that they see aspects of themselves that are not as transcendent as they once thought. They are humbled and see the need to grow even more.

### **Tylenol and Other Lessons**

What does transcendent character look like when the rubber meets the road? Take the transcendent leadership shown in the Tylenol crisis of 1982. Johnson & Johnson learned that people had died after taking Tylenol and, as the investigation unfolded, further discovered that some of its bottles had been removed from the shelves, laced with cyanide, and put back. At the time, Tylenol accounted for a huge percentage of Johnson & Johnson's profits and was the leader in painkillers. It outsold many of its competitors combined. So, this crisis was a huge blow to Johnson & Johnson. What were they to do?



The company put a strategy together that pit itself and the product down the list of priorities past the “bigger thing”: “How can we protect the people?” Regardless of the costs, they figured that one death was too many to risk. They immediately pulled Tylenol off the shelves in Chicago and, soon thereafter, pulled it totally off the market. They removed it from every shelf in the United States. That is transcendent action. It is one thing to say that one of your values is people, or customer safety. It is another to take the strongest product of your company and stop selling it to save one person. That is the right thing to do. It is different from any “cost-benefit” analysis of things which are good.

So, to value the right things is a beginning. To make choices that cost us to serve them is the end. But, as Tylenol’s makers found out, the end of oneself, the end of self-interest is the beginning of an even greater self. You win in the end by losing in the beginning, if you lose to the more important things.

### **Making the Shifts**

A person with integrated character is a person who possesses the awareness that it is not all about him or her, and the ability and willingness to make the necessary adjustments to the things that transcend him or her at any given juncture. If people do that, then their wake in both their tasks and relationships is going to be bigger and better for everyone concerned. When the crucibles of testing come, in their work life, their marriage, their personal lives, or for the organization they lead, they will be able to meet the demands of reality because they are in touch with reality. It is not just about them.

## **PART VIII: CONCLUSION**

### **WHERE DID IT GO?**

Having now seen what character is, and what its absence looks like, let’s take a look at why we have those character “chinks” so that moving forward, you can do a few very powerful things:

1. Understand why you might have some “gaps” to work on
2. Accept yourself and realize that there is nothing “wrong” with having gaps
3. Know what to do next to resolve them

## **Being Human, Superhuman, and Dysfunctional All at Once**

The good news is that every human being is to some degree unintegrated. We all lack integrity in the ways that we are talking about in this study. We all can grow. But to do that we have to understand that the idealization of people, whereby we think they don't have struggles and weaknesses as we do, is a fantasy. You have to get over the fantasy that there are perfectly "together" people and join the community of growers, whereby we all realize that we are humans who all have a "next step" to take in our growth. We all have talents, even superhuman ones at times, and weaknesses and dysfunctions. The trick is to embrace those and become people and organizations that have a mentality of "imperfect stars who are getting better." The more that stance or thought can become your personal and organizational culture, the more everyone is going to achieve.

## **Where It Comes From**

This study does not attempt to answer the questions why the world and the people in it are imperfect. I am just going to assume that we all know that it is, and you can decide on your own version of why. But, it is important to see where some of the individual expressions of imperfection or incompleteness come from. This will give you some empathy for yourself and others, as well as some clues as to why you are the way you are and what you need to do about it.

## **The Early Years**

Family, schools, churches, and friends affect people's character makeup in many different ways in the growing-up years. As we have gone through the specific areas of growth in integrity, you have probably seen some reasons why you have some gaps inside when you look at how you grew up. That is good; because it will help you get off your case and also show you what you need to do now.

As we have gone through the different dimensions of character integrity, we have talked about new experiences that will help you grow and integrate these parts of yourself. In fact, if you remember, the section on growth involved intentionally placing yourself in new situations that will stretch you past your current abilities, which by definition is your past experience. And, as you gain new experiences, those become your "past" also and thus become part of your character. You can literally get a "new past" by doing

something new today. Tomorrow, that new experience will be part of your past, and you will have grown.

### **Lack of Skills Acquisition**

Besides the dysfunctional experiences we have, and the compensatory patterns we develop growing up as a result of bad experience, that is also the lack of good experience that teaches us how to be the people we need to be. A bird is instinctually programmed to migrate. But, you and I have to learn how to resolve conflict, or to exercise judgment when our emotions are getting in the way, or to use due diligence when we are excited about pulling the trigger on some deal. We have to learn impulse control. We have to learn how to embrace our own failure in a way that is motivating instead of deflating. Those things are not instinctual in humans. In fact, they are in some ways “counter instinctual.” We have to be trained out of the immature patterns through discipline.

For example, where have you ever been taught the skills needed to communicate in a way that will prevent, as much as possible, being betrayed? Where have you been taught to relate in a way that will have others experience you as being “for” them and will develop loyalty and trust? Or, how to observe yourself in a way that minimizes your blind spots, thus leaving you less vulnerable to failure or mistakes? These are all aspects of our character makeup that we have to be taught and disciplined to do, but often are not. If we haven’t been taught, chances are we are left doing a “work-around,” or overcompensating in another way, or worse, avoiding that entire area of life and work.

### **Proper Structured Feedback**

We also form character as our experience is structured for us with good feedback. To grow, and to internalize new patterns, we need a “feedback loop” that sees where we are at any given level, makes you aware of it, gives us feedback with a path to do better, monitors the new changes, and repeats the cycle. That way we are internalizing not only the new skill, but the awareness and self-correction that is a necessary aspect to our performance.

### **Support That Does Not Enable**

In character growth, the road is sometimes rocky. We have to swallow our

pride, our egos, our resistance, and sometimes just bite the bullet and hear things we don't want to hear. In that process, we can feel terrible. Almost everyone has at some time gotten feedback that was less than flattering from a superior. Sometimes it can be so tough that you either want to quit or think that you can never master what you are being told to do. So, at those times, we also need the arm around the shoulder. We need support, and encouragement to do the hard thing. We need the push to keep going. To know that a leader or someone cares about us can help us to do the hard next step. If we know we have someone on our team, it changes everything.

### **Practice without Catastrophic Results**

If you have not had a safe place to develop different aspects of who you are, and to practice in ways that your career or life is not at risk, you have probably not developed certain character traits. In some ways, you have been in survival mode, and that is not the mode in which we usually develop new aspects of character, other than perseverance. Too much protection is going on when you are just trying to survive. New skills require openness, but survival requires protecting oneself, and to some degree, not being open. That is why in fear-based corporate cultures, people often do not grow in new ways. They are too busy guarding themselves and watching their back.

### **Improper Motivation**

Some aspects of personal and character development are seen as something we "ought to do." To some degree, most people have moments when they think they should be doing some sort of life review, or inventory and thinking about ways that they could be better. But usually, the things that we only think we "ought" to do, or "it would be good to do," give way to the needs of the urgent things that our lives and performance demands are asking us to do. As a result, because we don't become whom we need to be, in the end we don't do the things we need to do. We live upside-down lives.

So, what does motivate us to develop character where we do not have it? Reality, losses, rewards, and consequences motivate us. You see change when people have to finally face the reality that their lack of ability in some area is costing them. The alcoholic does not get treatment until the spouse and kids throw him or her out. The non exerciser doesn't get healthy until

the heart attack. Both have been told that they “ought to do better.” But change does not hit until reality does.

If you are going to grow and develop or help someone else, you will have to get out of the “ought top’s” and into reality. When you realize that you are only going to get what you desire in love or work through the character growth that is needed, you will get to work. Not before. So, if you have never been in a place where it was safe to face reality, or where you have the need to face it, or had the help to face it, that may be part of why there are gaps.

### **The Heart**

Anyone can change, but they have to want to. Consequences can motivate someone previously unmotivated. Love and support can do the same. New opportunity or new environment of growth and ingredients previously not available can do that as well. We can influence previously unmotivated people to change. You can actually get them to “want to,” to some degree, if they want to.

Call it timing, or heart, but some people are just not either ready to change or don’t want to. They just take a stance in life whereby they do not want to be different and just want the world to adapt to them instead of vice versa. As the founders of AA said, for those people they were not able to offer much help.

### **Genes, Experiences, and Choices**

There is some truth in that someone’s constitutional makeup and temperament have bearing on their character issues. If you go into a nursery at any hospital, you can almost see the ones who are going to “go with the flow.” The sad truth is that to some degree, some of their necessary growth paths are already awaiting them. The passive ones are going to have to work harder on being direct and assertive, and the screamers are going to one day have to learn to go against their nature and shut up and listen. Genes are real determinants of behavior. There is not a lot you can do about what you started with to somehow change your history. Your genetic makeup is what it is. But here is the reality: your life has many determinants, and you are responsible for dealing with them. Your genes/temperament are two determinants. So is your past experience, and so are the choices that you have made along the line.

You can alter your experience and you can make new choices that build the kind of character that is going to enable you to meet the demands of reality. You can learn the kinds of experiences that you need to build new abilities, and the kinds of choices you can make. The promise is that as you grow you can negotiate more and more of the realities that you face and, as you do, realize more of who you were created to be.

So as we end our journey looking at integrity, there are a few takeaway points that I would like you to keep in mind:

- Integrity is not something that you either “have or don’t have.” You probably have aspects where you do, and parts where you don’t.
- You might think that the high achievers somehow have it all together, but they don’t.
- All of us have issues in our character that are great opportunities for growth and development. You are not bad, inadequate, or somehow defective because of that. You are human. Accept it, embrace it, and let’s get on the journey.
- When you understand where character comes from, you can better understand and accept why you and some others that you know have some gaps inside. It makes perfect sense why you are missing some abilities.
- Also, when you understand where character comes from, you begin to get a glimpse of the kinds of things that are going to help you grow.
- And lastly, there is hope. When you get motivated by the reality desires that you have and realize that changes can bring those to fruition, you can get moving.

The more you see reality, the more you will be able to access what really works and get better results. Your fruitfulness will improve because you will be operating in the world as it really is, and that is where profits are made. The people who see the truth are the ones who always score. And as you do that, you will become more effective and charge into dealing with negatives like never before. Vice versa, as you engage those problems, you get better results, see more reality, and people trust you more. The circle of integration gets larger and your heart, mind, and soul expand.