

# Be a Person Who Practices Non-Situational Integrity

## by Denis Waitley

Integrity is not relative to the situation you happen to find yourself in and doesn't sell out to expediency. Its short supply is getting even shorter, but without it, leadership is a façade. **Learning to see through exteriors is a critical development in the transition from adolescence to adulthood.** Sadly, most people continue to be taken in by big talk and media popularity, flashy or bizarre looks, and expensive possessions. They move through most of their years convinced that the externals are what count, and are thus doomed to live shallow lives. Men and women who rely on their looks or status to feel good about themselves inevitably do everything they can to enhance the impression they make – and do correspondingly little to develop their inner value and personal growth. The paradox is that the people who try hardest to impress are often the least impressive. Puffing to appear powerful is an attempt to hide insecurity.

In the Roman Empire's final corrupt years, status was conveyed by the number of carved statues of the gods displayed in people's courtyards. As in every business, the Roman statue industry had good and bad sculptors and merchants. As the empire became ever more greedy and narcissistic, the bad got away with as much as they could. Sculptors became adept at using wax to hide cracks and chips in marble and most people couldn't discern the difference in quality.

Statues began to weep or melt under the scrutiny of sunlight or heat in foyers. For statues of authentic fine quality, carved by reputable artists, people had to go to the artisan marketplace in the Roman Quad and look for booths with signs declaring *sine cera*, which translates in English to mean, without wax. We, too, look for the real thing in friends, products, and services. In people, we value sincerity, from the words, *sine cera*, more than almost any other virtue. We expect it from our leaders, which we are not getting in our political, media, business and sports heroes for the most part. We must demand it of ourselves.

Integrity that strengthens an inner value system is the real human bottom line. Commitment to a life of integrity in every situation demonstrates that your word is more valuable than a surety bond. It means you don't base your decisions on being politically correct. You do what's right, not fashionable. You know that truth is absolute, not a device for manipulating others. And you win in the long run, when the stakes are highest. If I were writing a single commandment for leadership it would be, "You shall conduct yourself in such a manner as to set an example worthy of imitation by your children and subordinates." In simpler terms, if they shouldn't be doing it, neither should you. I told my kids, "clean up your room," and they inspected the condition of my garage. I told them that honesty was our family's greatest virtue, and they commented on the radar detector I had installed in my car. When I told them about the vices of drinking and wild parties, they watched from the upstairs balcony, the way our guests behaved at our adult functions.

It's too bad some of our political and business leaders don't understand that "What you are speaks so loudly that no one really pays attention to what you say." But it is even more true that if what you are matches what you say, your life will speak forcefully indeed.

It's hardly a secret that learning ethical standards begins at home. A child's first inklings of a sense of right and wrong come from almost imperceptible signals received long before he or she reaches the age of rational thought about morality. Maybe you're asking yourself what kind of model you are for future generations, remembering that people are either honest or dishonest, that integrity is all or nothing, and that children can't be fooled in such basic matters. They learn by example.

To remind myself of my responsibility **to live without wax, with sincerity and integrity**, I took the liberty of re-writing Edgar A. Guest's poem, "Sermons We See", to apply to setting an example as a real winner for my children and grandchildren.

I'd rather watch a winner, than hear one any day. I'd rather have one walk with me, than merely show the way. The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear. Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear. And the best of all the coaches are the ones who live their deeds. For to see the truth in action is what everybody needs. I can soon learn how to do it, if you'll let me see it done. I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run. And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true. But, I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do. For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give. But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live. I'd rather watch a winner, than hear one any day.

Hey, politician, business leader, motion picture producer, television actor, rock star, sports star. Hey mom, hey dad. Don't tell me how to live. Show me by your actions. You're my role models.

Action Idea: When you talk to others, beginning right now, don't try to impress them by talking about your accomplishments. Let your actions speak for you. Ask more questions.