Honesty

During the war years, we became accustomed to shortages and making do with substitutes for commonly used items. But it was too much for my 2-year-old niece when she got her first look at her red and wrinkled newborn baby brother. Her comment: “Is that all you could get?” *(Reba Mitchell, in Reminisce magazine)*

Personal and corporate honesty often pays off in dramatic ways. Donald Douglas, for example, built such a reputation for his aircraft company and worked to preserve it. There was the time Douglas was competing with Boeing to sell Eastern Air Lines its first big jets. Eddie Rickenbacker, who headed Eastern, is said to have told Douglas that his specifications and claims for the DC-8 were close to his competition on everything but noise suppression. He then gave Douglas one last chance to out-promise Boeing on this feature. After consulting his engineers, Douglas reported that he did not feel he could make that promise. Rickenbacker replied, “I know you can’t. I wanted to see if you were still honest. You just got yourself an order for $135,000,000. Now go home and silence those jets!” *(Bits & Pieces)*

When a certain couple went to bed after watching “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” on TV, the husband was in an amorous mood. He asked his wife if she wanted to do something about it. She said no. “Is that your final answer?” he asked. “Yes.” “Well, then,” the husband replied, “I think I’d like to call a friend.” *(Reader’s Digest)*

Many people today don’t want honest answers insofar as honest means unpleasant or disturbing. They want a soft answer that turneth away anxiety. *(Louis Kronenberger, in The Cart and the Horse)*

Bad week for: Honesty, after Stephen Foster, a supermarket clerk in Birtley, England, returned $1.3 million that was accidentally deposited into his bank account by his employer. As a reward, Foster was given a crate of Budweiser beer. (*The Week magazine, December 25, 2009 - January 8, 2010)*

My dear friend, a divorcee, never remarried, and her daughter wanted to know why. “The men I know will bring too much heavy baggage to the marriage and I simply don’t want to put up with it,” my friend explained. Taking her mother’s hand in hers, my friend’s daughter said sweetly, “I hate to break the news to you, Mom, but you’re not exactly carry-on yourself.” *(Jean Bradtke, in Reader’s Digest)*

When the boss overshares: CEOs have long tried to keep their insecurities and failings out of public view, said Rachel Feintzeig in The Wall Street Journal. But some executives are finding that "baring it all -- even the bad stuff -- can be good for business." When James Rhee took the helm of Ashley Stewart, a nearly bankrupt plus-size clothing chain, he confessed at an all-staff meeting that he was "the least qualified person" to run the company and that he desperately missed his out-of-state family. His openness unnerved some workers, but others walked away inspired. Experts say that leaders who admit such vulnerabilities can "breed loyalty." Rand Fishkin publicly blogged about his insomnia and depression while CEO of Moz, a Seattle-based marketing-software-firm; staff said it caused heartburn but also camaraderie. "Whatever your dirty skeletons in the closet are," Fishkin said, "just open the closet and show everyone." *(The Week magazine, May 18, 2018)*

Mom: “Holly, when's your next basketball practice?” Daughter: “Friday.” Mom: “Can I come?” Daughter: “Why don't you wait for a game, Mom?” Mom: “But I love practices! And sometimes I have suggestions for the coach!” Daughter: “Which is why coach asked me not to tell you where we're practicing.” Mom: “What?” *(Jan Eliot, in Stone Soup comic strip)*

There are many kinds of honesty depending on what motivates it -- internal revenue computers or character, for example. *(Dr. O. A. Battista)*

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The best measure of a man's honesty isn't his income tax return. It's the zero adjustment on his bathroom scale. *(Arthur C. Clark, in Omni)*

If you are honest because you think that is the best policy, your honesty has already been corrupted. *(Sydney J. Harris, Publishers-Hall Syndicate)*

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Honesty is a very expensive gift. Don't expect it from cheap people. *(Warren Buffett)*

Heart: “See, I figure if I build up enough speed going down Hari-Kari Hill, the air flow under the wings will lift me into the sky!” Girlfriend: “You're gonna go down Hari-Kari Hill in that thing?” Heart: “Relax, I got a book all about airplanes, so I know what I'm doing.” Girlfriend: “I got a book about first aid, so I better go with you.” Heart: “Nothing like a vote of confidence from your girlfriend.” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart Of The City comic strip)*

Acting is all about honesty. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made. *(George Burns)*

Thoughts are never honest. Emotions are. *(Albert Camus)*

Honesty may be the best policy, but it’s important to remember that apparently, by elimination, dishonesty is the second-best policy. *(George Carlin)*

Make yourself an honest man and then you may be sure there is one less rascal in the world. *(Thomas Carlyle)*

[“I told my girl the truth,” a man confided to a friend. “I told her I was seeing a psychiatrist. And she told me the truth: “She’s seeing a psychiatrist, two plumbers and a bartender.” *(Rodney Dangerfield, in Quote magazine)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[How desperately difficult it is to be honest with oneself. It is much easier to be honest with other people. *(Edward F. Benson, novelist)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

**Dishonest Policy: A schoolteacher was impressing her pupils about being honest in all things. “Suppose,” she asked the class, “you were walking along Main Street and found a briefcase that contained $500,000, a half million dollars in cash! What would you do?” Little Johnny in the back row raised both his hands and the teacher called on him. “Well,” said Johnny, “if it belonged to a poor family, I would return it!” *(Railway Clerk Interchange)***

First boy: “Max, what's the dumbest thing you've ever done?” Second boy: “I don't know.” First boy: “That was pretty dumb when you tried to fly a trash can like it was a rocket ship.” Second boy: “You were the one who said it would work!” First boy: “But I wasn't so dumb I believed me!” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)*

[It is easier to be honest with others than with ourselves. *(Bits & Pieces)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

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[During one of the last major offensives of World War II,](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) Dwight Eisenhower was walking near the Rhine and came upon a GI who seemed depressed. “How are you feeling, son?” he asked. “General,” the young man replied, “I'm awful nervous.” “Well,” Eisenhower said, “you and I are a good pair then, because I'm nervous too. Maybe if we just walk along together, we'll be good for each other.” No sermon. No special advice. But what words of encouragement! *(Mark R. Littleton, in Reader's Digest)*

[During the last year of Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration, he received the following note from a 12-year-old schoolboy: “Dear Mr. President,” said the letter. “I would like to know if the law makes schoolteachers get drafted in the service. If they do I know one who has not been. His name is James Smith. He teaches gym in my school and he is 24 years old. Thank you.” *(Gordon Shelly, in Catholic Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

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[If you’re honest and fair as you can be, not only in business but in life, things will work out. *(Kate Spade, handbag and accessory designer)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[My sister teaches in a progressive school. One day a first-grader, running after another boy, fell in the classroom and skinned his knee. “Remember, big boys don't cry,” the teacher consoled him. “I'm not gonna cry,” the little fellow replied. “I'm gonna sue.” *(Mrs. H. Priday, in Catholic Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

The most honest form of filmmaking is to make a film for yourself. *(Peter Jackson)*

[Honesty is incompatible with amassing a large fortune. *(Mahatma Gandhi)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Golfer: “What’s your handicap?” Second golfer: “Honesty.” *(Executive Speechwriter Newsletter)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[I am an amateur handyman, and it is difficult for me to keep out of things when I'm forced to call in an expert. A few months ago, I called a plumber to locate a leak in the upstairs shower. While he was looking for the source of the problem, I followed along with helpful advice. He put up with this for a while, but finally lost his patience. He turned, looked me in the eye and said, "Mister, there ain't no use buying a dog if you're going to do your own barking." *(R. C. Hanger, in Reader's Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Mom: “Okay, I'll pick you up after practice.” Son: “Okay, Mom.” Mom: “Give me a hug.” Son: “Oh, right. All the guys are watching.” Mom: “How about just a high-five?” Son: "How about you just wave from the car while I ignore you?” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

I’ve never put much store by honesty. I mean, how can you trust a word whose first letter you don’t even pronounce? *(Lorrie Moore, writer)*

[I don’t lie. I improve on life. *(Josephine Baker)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Mom: “I just replaced an ice cream sandwich of yours that I took yesterday! You never even missed it!” Rose: “You don't realize what you've got to be grumpy about until you lose it!” *(Pat Brady, in Rose Is Rose comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Now that they were retired, an elderly couple was discussing their plans for the future. “What will you do if I die before you do?” he asked her. After some thought, she said she’d probably want to share a house with three other single or widowed women. She’d look for younger roommates since she was so active for her age, she said. She asked him, “What will you do if I die first?” “Probably the same thing.” *(The American Legion magazine)****\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\****](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)A schoolteacher was impressing her pupils about being honest in all things. “Suppose,” she asked the class, “you were walking along Main Street and found a briefcase that contained $500,000, a half million dollars in cash! What would you do?” Little Johnny in the back row raised both his hands and the teacher called on him. “Well,” said Johnny, “if it belonged to a poor family, I would return it!?” *(Railway Clerk Interchange)*

I am a mother who also has a career outside the home. Juggling my responsibilities is not always easy. My mother was helping by baby-sitting my son Dirk at her house one day. When I stopped to pick him up after work, Mom told me that Dirk had followed her into the bedroom as she put some things away in the **closet. “Grandma,” he asked, “what room is this?” “This is a closet, Dirk,” she explained. “We don’t have a room like this in our house,” he said. “Of course you do,” she insisted. “You have lots of closets at your home.” When he again denied having closets at our house, she tried another tack. “Where do you keep all your clothes?” she asked. A true child of the times, he replied, “In the dryer.” (Shari Hanson, in Reader’s Digest)**

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[An Arizona man hit a nearly $230,000 jackpot on a slot machine in Las Vegas – but left without realizing what he'd won. When the slot player got a screen reading "Resolving progressive prize, Please wait," he lin](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)gered a few minutes, then left to make a dinner reservation. Two days later, workers fixing the malfunctioning machine "detected the jackpot hit," said the Nevada Gaming Control Board. Investigators spent three weeks tracking down the unknowing winner through surveillance video, witness interviews, and a credit card payment to a ride-hailing service. He was delivered a check for $229,368.52. *(The Week magazine, February 25, 2022)*

[Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. *(Thomas Jefferson)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Honesty is something you can't wear out. *(Waylon Jennings)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Only enemies speak the truth; friends and lovers lie endlessly, caught in the web of duty. *(Stephen King)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Billy says to his Mom: “One kid in my class knows every answer. But his desk is nowhere near mine.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[I didn’t know if my small grandson had managed to learn all of his colors yet. So I decided to test him. I would point to something, ask him what color it was, and he’d tell me. This had gone on for several colors when he looked up at me and said in a very serious tone of voice, “Grandma, I think you should try to figure some of these out for yourself!" *(Mrs. Harold Manor, in Country magazine)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

Drabble: "Do you need a letter of recommendation, eh, Troy? Let's see what we can do. I can honestly say that I have known and admired Troy for the past ten years." Little boy: Don't write that, Mr. Drabble!" "Drabble: "Why not?" Little boy: I'm only eight years old!" Drabble: "OK, I'll leave out the Honestly." *(Kevin Fagan, in Drabble comic strip)*

[The honest](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) man must be a perpetual renegade. *(Charles Peguy, French essayist)*

**Do not mistake friendship for a license to tell the truth. More pain has been inflicted by indiscriminate truth-telling than by lies. Honesty too often means being hurtful and wounding someone. As long as you keep true counsel with yourself, it doesn’t hurt if you dissemble with a friend. *(David Brown, in The Rest of Your Life Is the Best of Your Life)***

[First child: “We drove to the forest, and cut down our own Christmas tree.” Second child: “We flew on an airplane to Canada.” Third child: “I ate so much chocolate that I had diarrhea for two days.” Parents: “Let's talk about judgment.” Third child: “He said to tell about our most memorable holiday event!” *(Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott, in Baby Blues comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Heart: “Where are all my Karlie doll's clothes? I know I left them right here! Why can't people just leave my things where they find them? I always leave my stuff right where I know they'll be and somebody goes and moves them! Why are people always moving my things to secret places?” Mom: “Perhaps if you put your things away when you were done, you'd always know where to find them.” Heart: “Nothing kills a good rant like common sense.” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart Of The City comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[As we left home to visit my husband in the hospital, my two children got into an argument. Distracted, I came too close to my mother-in-law's parked car and grazed it slightly. The next day we were again on our way to the hospital when, about half a block away, a car came screeching around the corner and collided with my front end. No one was hurt, but a police officer arrived to file a report. “Where do you live,” the officer asked me. “Right there, where that red car is parked,” I replied, pointing down the street. “Yeah,” my 13-year-old son piped up. “That's the one she hit yesterday!” *(Jan Cathey, in Reader's Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Honesty pays, but it don't seem to pay enough to suit a lot of people. *(Kin Hubbard, cartoonist)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[An honest man is the noblest work of God. *(Alexander Pope)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[A](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) principle cannot be compromised but only adhered to or surrendered. Honesty is abandoned as much by the theft of a dime as of a dollar. *(Leonard E. Read, in Meditations on Freedom)*

[A piano maker asked Will Rogers for an endorsement of its pianos, which he had never played. Rogers replied, "Dear sirs, I guess your pianos are about the best I ever leaned against." *(Ben Franklin's Almanac, p. 190)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[A young woman was waiting for a bus in a slum area one evening when a rookie policeman approached her. “Want me to wait with you?” he asked. “That’s not necessary,” she replied. “I’m not afraid.” “Well, then,” he grinned, “would you mind waiting with me?” *(Bits & Pieces)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Andy Rooney’s characteristic bluntness landed him his first job at CBS. As a freelance writer in 1949, he found himself standing in an elevator next to Arthur Godfrey, the network’s biggest radio star. Rooney remarked that Godfrey’s show could use better writing. Godfrey hired him on the spot, launching a career in radio and television that spanned 60 years. *(The Week magazine, November 18, 2011)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Our great democracies still tend to think that a stupid man is more likely to be honest than a clever man. *(Bertrand Russell)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[No legacy is so rich as honesty. *(William Shakespeare)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[I am afraid we must make the world honest before we can honestly say to our children that honesty is the best policy. *(George Bernard Shaw)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Daughter: “Mom? Are you sick?” Mom: “Uh huh.” Daughter: “I can always tell when you're sick.” Mom: “How?” Daughter: “You start looking a lot more like Gramma.” *(Jan Eliot, in Stone Soup comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Honesty is stronger medicine than sympathy, which may console but often conceals. *(Gretel Ehrlich, in The Atlantic Monthly)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[First boy: “Why didn't you tell me you were going to be a superhero too?” Second boy: “I thought you were going to be a monster.” First boy: “I changed my mind!” Second boy: “I changed my mind too.” First boy: “Warn me the next time you're going to be so wishy-washy.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[My son had just turned 15 when I finally decided to talk to him about sex. To ensure private time, I brought him on a ski trip and began our talk on the chairlift so he couldn't escape. “Do you know about girls and babies?” I asked. He nodded but cut me off. The next ride, I brought it up again, only to have him look away in silence. On the third trip, already knowing I had waited too long, I bluntly asked, “Son, would you like to talk about sex?” “Gee, Dad,” he responded, “is that all you ever think about?” *(R. M. Ettington, in Reader's Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Our three teen-agers are usually tolerant of their father's taste in classical music, but on a long interstate trip, their patience ran thin. As the operatic tenor on the radio warbled on, a tired voice from the back of the van called out, “Dad, could we let this guy off at the next exit?” *(Ruth M. Scherer, in Reader's Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[My son's third-grade class visited the local post office as a school project. After they returned, the teacher had them write thank-you notes to the postmaster. Here is Tim's note: “Dear Sir, We enjoyed our visit to your post office. I especially liked your safe. I will return. Your friend, Tim Walsh.” *(Christine R. Walsh, in Catholic Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[In economics class, a high-school student was studying the United States/Japan trade situation. One evening, he turned to his father and said, “Dad, what factors influence the U.S./Japanese balance of trade?” His father replied, “Well, exchange-rate movements, tariffs, competitive advantages, cultural differences, economic recessions or expansions, domestic savings versus consumption, government policies . . .” Cutting him off, the boy said, “Look Dad, if you don’t know, just say so.” *(Quoted in Executive Speechwriter Newsletter)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Honesty is the best policy – when there’s money in it. *(Mark Twain)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[First boy: “I thought you were going to wait for it to snow.” Second boy: “I changed my mind.” First boy: “How come?” Second boy: “I start to lose my enthusiasm when I start getting a heat rash.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[Paul Kinsella of Belleville, Illinois, wanted to know just how honest people are. So he spent a month dropping wallets around his hometown, each filled with $2.10 in cash and a fake $50 gift certificate, to see who would return them. He eventually got back 74 of the 100 wallets. “That actually surprised me that that many people would return them,” said Lt. Don Sax of the local police department. “I think it’s great that they did, especially with such a small amount of money being in there.” *(The Week magazine, February 2, 2007)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[When you live in a place like Ketchikan, Alaska, which gets about 13 feet of rain annually, you treasure sunny days. After 2 1/2 months of a rainy summer, I heard a radio **weather** forecaster gloomily announce: “Fair today--and grossly unfair tomorrow.” *(Patricia Fordney, in Reader's Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[I was very grateful when a New York City cabdriver called from the taxi I had just left to tell me that my pocketbook was still in the back seat. I offered to reward him, but he said, “If you don’t mind, just let me know how much there is in your purse.” When I informed him, the driver wrote the amount in a notebook and explained, “I’m keeping track of what it’s costing me to be honest.” *(Barbara Arnstein, in Reader’s Digest)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[The crude commercialism of America, its materializing spirit, are entirely due to the country having adopted for its natural hero a man who could not tell a lie. *(Oscar Wilde, Irish-born dramatist)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[“Honesty” without compassion and understanding is not honesty, but subtle hostility. *(Dr. Rose N. Franzblau, in New York Post)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[If you do not tell the truth about yourself, you cannot tell it about other people. *(Virginia Woolf)*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

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