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**Telling the Truth...or Not**

**By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.**

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**TELLING THE TRUTH...OR NOT**  
**By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.**

Having counseled individuals, couples, families and business partners for the past 35 years, I have often encountered people struggling in their relationships about whether or not to tell their truth to someone important to them.

Deciding whether or not we choose to speak our truth needs to come from our own honesty with ourselves about why we are speaking the truth. Truth can enhance or destroy a relationship, depending upon the intent.

There are times when telling your "truth" is unloving. For example, you might not be wild about what your friend is wearing, but if your friend is giving an important presentation and asks you how she (or he) looks, it would not be in anyone's

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highest good to give your opinion. Opinions are generally judgments and rarely contribute to the good of a relationship. It is therefore very important to distinguish between opinions and truth. Too often, just because we think something is true, we assume that it is true. However, truth is a fact, not an opinion. If I am hungry, that is a fact, but how you look is my opinion.

There are times when someone might be having a hard time, and it is not fun to be around them. For example, your friend has lost a beloved person to death, and your friend is in mourning. It is not fun for you to be around the grief and stress, yet telling your

friend that it doesn't feel good to be around him or her would not be loving or supportive of your friend. It is very important, when telling our truth, to distinguish between being loving to ourselves and others – having our own highest good and the other's highest good at heart – and making another responsible for our feelings. Telling another that, "I'm upset because you're tense and it doesn't feel good to be around you," may indicate a lack of empathy and making the other responsible for your feelings.

Therefore, the important thing in telling the truth is to be honest with yourself about your own intent in telling your truth. Are you truly being loving to yourself and others, or are you using your truth to control another and make him or her responsible for you? Are you speaking your truth to enhance the relationship, or to get the other to change?

However, there are many times when speaking your truth is in your highest good and the highest good of others. Yet many of us have much difficulty speaking our truth to others, especially to important others such as parents, siblings, close friends, co-workers and mates. We are afraid the other person will be angry or hurt by our truth, even when we state it without judgment or blame. So we say yes when we mean no, say things are okay when they aren't, avoid difficult topics of conversation, pretend to enjoy something – food, sex, a movie, the topic of conversation, the way we are spending time – to avoid upsetting another. We may continue to tolerate things that are intolerable to us to avoid a conflict.

Withholding our truth can be a form of control, just as telling our truth can be a form of control. We may want to control how another feels about us and treats us. We want to make sure we don't get attacked or rejected. Often I hear my clients say, when I

encourage them to tell the truth, "I can't say that. He (or she) will get mad." Yes, he or she might get hurt or mad. Yet courage may mean the willingness to speak your truth anyway and learn to deal with the other person's response. This is part of developing an inner loving Adult self – learning to not take the other person's behavior personally, learning to stay solid in our truth and allow the other person to go through whatever he or she experiences in response to our truths without taking responsibility for the other's feelings.

Avoiding the other's hurt and anger is only one part of the challenge. The other part is that we may be unwilling to know the truth regarding whether or not that other person cares about what is important to us. If, for example, you tell your mate that you are unhappy with a particular aspect of your sex life, and your mate gets hurt or angry instead of wanting to understand, you

might feel even worse. It feels awful to speak our truth and receive an uncaring response. The deeper feeling is one of gut-wrenching loneliness. It is deeply lonely to share something that is important to us and receive an uncaring response from some one important to us.

So, not only are we often afraid of dealing with another's anger, but we may be even more afraid of the lonely feeling of being uncared for. Until we are willing to know the truth of whether or not the other person really does care about what is important to us, we may avoid speaking our truth.

However, when we withhold our truth to avoid conflict and avoid feeling uncared for by another, the consequence is that we feel alone and maybe depressed because we are not caring about ourselves. When we don't stand up for ourselves, we end up feeling unimportant, regardless of how others treat us. We cannot ignore ourselves and feel good inside.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Are we willing to give ourselves up to avoid losing others, or are we willing to lose others rather than lose ourselves?" I have found that losing myself is never worth it. If I lose others as a result of speaking my truth, then I have to accept the truth that those people never had my highest good at heart anyway. People who care about my highest good applaud me when I speak the truth that supports my highest good. People who care about me support me in living my truth. Those who just want to use me in some way will

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get angry or hurt at my truth, and that lets me know the truth about their intent.

Therefore, we have to be willing to know another's truth regarding whether or not that person really cares about us in order to tell our heartfelt truth. Let's say that you say to your partner, "It is not tolerable for me to be around you when you are drinking. I feel shut out and disconnected from you when you drink. It is just too lonely to be with you when you are drinking." If alcohol is more important to your partner than you are, then the response is likely to be, "That's your problem, not mine. Stop blaming me for your feelings. Stop trying to control me!" If you are more important to your partner than alcohol, then your partner will address the issue and get some help with the problem. The question is, do you want to know the reality of the situation? Are you prepared to take loving action for yourself if you discover that your partner really doesn't care about the effect his or her behavior is having on you?

You will have the courage to speak your truth when you have the courage to know the truth about any given relationship. What if

you say to your best friend, "I often feel judged by you and it doesn't feel good," and your best friend gets defensive and tells you it's all your problem. What are you going to do if your best friend consistently responds in an uncaring way? Are you willing to lose someone whom you have believed was your best friend, or are you going to avoid telling the truth to avoid knowing the truth? Are you willing to feel the loneliness if you find out that someone you thought cared really doesn't, or do you want to go on pretending that real caring exists with that person?

It takes great courage to tell the truth and discover the truth. We often kid ourselves into thinking that avoiding others' anger and hurt is a loving thing to do. We justify our behavior by telling ourselves that it's just that we don't want to hurt or upset others, or that we just don't want to deal with another's hurt or anger. Yet avoidance may not be loving to ourselves or others. Are you willing to sacrifice your own integrity to avoid the pain of conflict and loneliness? To me, nothing is worth a loss of integrity, not even the loss of another.

When you really tune into how you feel when you withhold your truth to protect yourself from conflict and loneliness, you will discover that honoring yourself by telling your truth, without

blame or judgment, is deeply empowering. You will feel on top of the world when you finally have the courage to speak your heartfelt truth when your intent is to support your own and others' highest good.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?", "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By My Kids?", "Healing Your Aloneness", "Inner Bonding", and "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By God?" Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course: <http://www.innerbonding.com> or <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com>

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## **Addiction to Blame**

### **By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.**

Allen consulted with me because his wife of 18 years had threatened to leave him if he didn't stop blaming her all the time. He admitted to frequently blaming her in a variety of situations. He blamed her if he thought she made a mistake, if he thought she was wrong about something, if he was feeling alone, or even if he had a bad day at work. He blamed her for asking him questions when he didn't know the answer. He would sometimes even blame her if his golf game was off. He always blamed her when he felt judged by her, or when he didn't get her approval. While he freely admitted that he blamed her, he couldn't seem to stop, and he had no idea why he blamed her.

As I explored various situations with Allen, it became apparent that he was not just blaming his wife. Allen was constantly blaming and judging himself. He would verbally beat himself up for mistakes, telling himself things like, "I'm such a jerk," and would often say very negative things to himself, such as, "Things will never get any better," or "I'm just a loser," or "I'm a big disappointment to myself." He would then feel angry and agitated as a result of abusing himself, but he never connected his anger with his self-judgment. Instead, he would dump his anger on his wife, or yell at other drivers on the freeway.

It became apparent to Allen that he would not be able to stop blaming his wife until he stopped blaming and judging himself. His addiction to blaming others was a direct result of his self-abuse.

The problem was that Allen had learned to be very self-indulgent regarding his thoughts. He let his thoughts run rampant, never stopping to discern whether or not what he was telling himself was the

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truth or was a lie. As a result, he was constantly allowing the wounded part of himself, his ego self, to be in charge. And this part of him was filled with all the lies he had learned in the 46 years of his life.

Allen was appalled when he realized that all his anger at others was really his anger at himself for abusing himself. He was projecting onto others what he was doing to himself. He saw that he was especially sensitive to others' judgment because he was so judgmental of himself.

As we explored why Allen was so self-abusive, he realized that he believed that if he judged himself enough, he could have control over getting himself to do it "right." He realized this wasn't true by an experience he had playing tennis.

"I played last Wednesday and I was in a really good mood. I was just playing for the fun of it, rather than to play well, and I played my best game ever! The very next day I played worse than I have for a long time. I realized that, having done so well on Wednesday, I now wanted control over doing as well on Thursday. As soon as I tried to control it, I lost it.

I want to stop doing this, but I've been doing it my while life. How do I stop?"

Stopping any addiction is always a challenge. Changing our thought process is especially challenging. However, there is a process available, but it will work only when you really want to change. Changing

from being self-abusive to self-loving has to become more important to you than continuing to try to control yourself through your self-judgments.

1. Pay attention to your feelings. Learn to be aware of when you are feeling angry, anxious, hurt, scared, guilty, shamed, depressed, and so on.
2. Make a conscious decision to learn about what you are telling yourself that is causing your pain, rather than ignoring it, turning to substance or process addictions, or continuing to abuse yourself.
3. Ask yourself, "What am I telling myself that is causing me to feel badly?" Once you are aware of what you are telling yourself, ask yourself, "Am I certain that what I'm telling myself is the truth, or is it just something I've made up?" Then ask yourself, "What am I trying to control by telling myself this?"
4. Once you are aware that you are telling yourself a lie that is causing you to feel badly, and why you are telling it to yourself, ask the highest, wisest part of yourself, or ask an inner teacher or a spiritual source of guidance, "What is the truth?" When you sincerely want to know the truth, it will easily come to you.
5. Change your thinking, now telling yourself the truth.
6. Notice how you feel. Lies will always make you feel badly, while the truth brings inner peace. Any time you are not in peace, go through this process to discover what lie you are telling yourself. Eventually, with enough practice, you will be in truth and peace more and more of the time.

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Addiction to Blame

Book Summary: What Is The Emperor Wearing?

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