Integrity: Honesty, Perseverance, Discipline

Integrity is rooted in honesty, to others and especially to oneself. This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man. -- Shakespeare: Polonius to Laertes in Hamlet

Self-deception rationalizes deviation from what you truly know to be right behavior. Self-deception comes naturally; we do it so we can give into temptation. It is also the first step in deceiving others; people are good at spotting liars who know they are lying, so we learn early to deceive ourselves first.

An important aspect of integrity is staying true to your values, and keeping your promises to yourself and others, in the face of challenge and difficulty. That is why perseverance and discipline are included here, and courage could be also. It is hard to be honest, especially when that could involve emotional conflict with yourself or with others.

A significant aspect of honesty is recognizing the limitations of your own perspective, and so this is clearly related to humility. He was constantly reminded of how startlingly different a place the world was when viewed from a point only three feet to the left. -- Douglas Adams, from The Salmon of Doubt

Being self-aware, leading an examined life, controlling emotions, maintaining healthy physical and spiritual practices, all take work; hence the connection to perseverance and discipline.

Honesty and integrity are crucial to science. Scientists who are true to the profession behave in a strange and counter-intuitive way: they try hard to come up with ideas that they think explain something about the world, and then they work very hard to try to prove themselves wrong.

Shared readings of quotes, poems, songs, etc., with time for comments

Honesty

The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered, is being insincere. -- Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Knowing other people is intelligence, knowing yourself is wisdom. Overcoming others takes strength, overcoming yourself takes greatness. -- Lao Tsu, in the “Tao Te Ching”
Spiritual empowerment is evidenced in our lives by our willingness to tell ourselves the truth, to listen to the truth when it's told to us, and to dispense truth as lovingly as possible, when we feel compelled to talk from the heart. -- Christina Baldwin

Our nature imposes on us a certain pattern of development which we must follow if we are to fulfill our best capacities and achieve at least the partial happiness of being human. This pattern must be properly understood and it must be worked out in essential elements. Otherwise, we fail. But it can be stated very simply, in a single sentence: *We must know the truth, and we must love the truth we know, and we must act according to the measure of our love.* What are the elements of this "pattern" I speak of? First, and most important of all: I must adapt myself to objective reality. Second, this adaptation is achieved by the work of my highest spiritual faculties – intelligence and will. Third, it demands expression when my whole being, commanded by my will, produces actions which, by their moral vitality and fruitfulness, show that I am living in harmony with the true order of things. -- Thomas Merton

I would admonish you, above all other considerations, to be honest. I mean honesty in every conception of the word: Let it enter into all the details of your work. -- William J. Mayo, MD

Honesty is such a lonely word. Everyone is so untrue. Honesty is hardly ever heard. And mostly what I need from you. -- Billy Joel, *Honesty*

An honest man's the noblest work of God. -- Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*

**Perseverance**

If a tree dies, plant another one. -- Linneaus

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not. It is the first lesson that ought to be learned. -- Thomas H. Huxley

The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't. -- Henry Ward Beecher

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination are omnipotent. The slogan "press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race. -- Misattributed to Calvin Coolidge. Earlier versions of the passage appear in print as early as 1881.

Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another. -- Walter Elliott
The waters wear the stones. -- Job, XIV. 19

My heart is moved by all I cannot save: 
so much has been destroyed 
I have to cast my lot with those 
who age after age, perversely, 
with no extraordinary power, 
reconstitute the world. 
— Adrienne Rich

Discipline

To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one's family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one's own mind. If a man can control his mind he can find the way to Enlightenment, and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him. -- Buddha

Self-respect is the fruit of discipline; the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself. -- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Poems

Self Portrait -- David Whyte

It doesn't interest me if there is one God or many gods. 
I want to know if you belong or feel abandoned. 
If you know despair or can see it in others.

I want to know if you are prepared to live in a world 
with its harsh need to change you. 
If you can look back with firm eyes saying this is where I stand.

I want to know if you know how to melt into that fierce heat of living, 
falling toward the center of your longing.

I want to know if you are willing to live, day by day, with the consequences 
of love and the bitter unwanted passion of your sure defeat.

I have been told, in that fierce embrace, even the gods speak of God.

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To be of use
by Marge Piercy
The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who stand in the line and haul in their places,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

For the young who want to
BY MARGE PIERCY

Talent is what they say
you have after the novel
is published and favorably
reviewed. Beforehand what
you have is a tedious
delusion, a hobby like knitting.

Work is what you have done
after the play is produced
and the audience claps.
Before that friends keep asking when you are planning to go out and get a job.

Genius is what they know you had after the third volume of remarkable poems. Earlier they accuse you of withdrawing, ask why you don't have a baby, call you a bum.

The reason people want M.F.A.’s, take workshops with fancy names when all you can really learn is a few techniques, typing instructions and somebody else’s mannerisms

is that every artist lacks a license to hang on the wall like your optician, your vet proving you may be a clumsy sadist whose fillings fall into the stew but you’re certified a dentist.

The real writer is one who really writes. Talent is an invention like phlogiston after the fact of fire. Work is its own cure. You have to like it better than being loved.

**Video**
Jordan Peterson - the necessity of virtue
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwUJHNPMUyU&t=529s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwUJHNPMUyU&t=529s)
Regarding honesty, 42:38-44:52

**Shared experiences**

*Time to share reactions, thoughts, understandings, experiences, etc. related to these virtues.*

Some seeds:
Who in your experience has demonstrated integrity in a way that impressed you?
When has being honest been difficult, either with others or, very likely, with yourself?
Do you have examples of when discipline and perseverance paid off?
What stories in our culture relate to these concepts?
How do these concepts relate to raising children?

**More group discussion**

Why are these virtues important?
Why are they hard to live into?
Where can we improve in our own lives?