Ward, Misha

Honesty Paper

**I Cannot Tell a Lie…**

Society often views honesty as a highly valued personal trait which defines someone’s personal integrity. Ironically, this trait is surprisingly difficult to enact in most of our lives. This irony most likely has its roots in the old adage, “the truth hurts”. I remember when I was very young, I would revere Abe Lincoln and George Washington and respected their honest deeds and would try my best to emulate them. However, as I grew up and reached childhood, I remember telling white lies and the ensuing slippery slope of telling a truth or a lie. The most infamous example was when I would not take my Fred Flintstone vitamins and hide them around the house in order not to take them (we still find some in Legos or under furniture once in a while). It was amazing the reasons I could come up with to tell a lie and justify it. Although I rarely told lies, I would almost always be caught and would in turn hurt someone that I cared about. I learned that being honest, although painful in some regards, can set you free.

As part of my leadership class, I was tasked with the objective of being 100% honest for three days and three nights. This included not lying, exaggerating, stretching the truth, telling “little white lies, stealing, speeding, or breaking the law. Because of my experiences in the past, I thought that this project would be very easy and a piece of cake. Although some parts of the “three days of honestly” were easy and I didn’t have to fundamentally change much of how I dealt with people, I found some parts incredibly challenging to complete. Throughout the “three days of honesty” though, I felt like I gained a better understanding of myself and the valuable impacts of being 100% honest. I have broken up my learning experience into three main sections, labeled “Cornel of Truth”, “The Benefits and Difficulties of Being 100% Truthful”, and “Being Honest to Yourself”, which I feel have really affected me.

**Cornel of Truth**

When I started this project, I figured that this project would be pretty straightforward due to the fact that I had learned early in life to be truthful. However, this project required me to be 100% truthful which meant that I always had to be alert of myself and what I did/say. Because of this, I really learned that my previous version of being “truthful” was by telling cornels of the truth or exaggerating. I discovered that I used those techniques on the first day after telling my mom about the project and that I was starting it, she would test me and see if I was telling nothing but the whole truth.

At that moment, I realized that telling half a truth is not being honest to the fullest extent. For example, we were going to go out for lunch when I started the “three days of honesty” and she asked if I was ready to leave yet. I replied, “Almost ready”. At this moment however, I realized I only really had put on some socks and clothes on to go outside but not shoes or made sure I had my wallet. I realized to some extent that I was telling just part of the truth. I apprehended that in order to tell the whole truth, I would have tell her that I was not ready due to the fact that I need to make sure I have to get my wallet and get my shoes on. From this point, I really understood that telling half-truths didn’t cut it and was too vague to be considered truthful. After learning this, I now understand that by being clear and concise I can be even more honest.

**The Benefits and Difficulties of Being 100% Truthful**

As the hours and days progressed, I started to see the great difficulty and great benefits in being honest 100% of the time. Such difficulties included not exaggerating, speeding, or stretching the truth. However, I found that by focusing and reminding myself periodically I had developed strategies and conditioned myself to avoid such behaviors. As mentioned before, by being concise and clear in my answers, I found that I significantly cut down on how much I stretched the truth. I also found that by being conscientious of the goal of the project helped me not exaggerate when talking to friends, family, and team members. Additionally, I reduced my incidents of speeding, which was my biggest worry at the start of the three days, by setting cruise controls and being extra diligent of speed limits.

Although the difficulties in the project was mostly maintaining honesty and reminding myself of my goal, the benefits were surprisingly valuable. Not only did I learn more about myself and how I deal with honesty, but I learned that I felt better about not worrying if I would get caught speeding or if people thought I exaggerated/fibbed. These two beneficial effects of the “three days of honesty” were so positive that I now do my best to do cruise control at 60 mph when on the freeway and try to exaggerate less.

**Being Honest to Yourself**

The last big ah-ha moment came on the last day when I was talking to my mother about how things were going in my life. During this conversation, I started talking about my relationship with my girlfriend and if I thought if it was going well. I realized then that when it comes to emotions, you can have multiple truths. I realized that half of you can want something, while the other half wants something completely different. I realized then, that despite the fact that the two sides conflict, it is important to really note both sides and be truthful that they are both present and equally important. In that moment, I knew how significant it is to be truthful with yourself when dealing with others and relationships. If you neglect the other side, it not only lying to yourself but also potentially hurting the other person (and lying to them in effect). I learned that in order to be a better person, I have to deal with how I handle my emotions and be truthful about them to myself.

**Conclusions**

The competing the “three days of honesty” really showed me how difficult being 100% honest can be but also how valuable being honest is. From telling the whole truth and learning the benefits of being 100% honest, to really understanding the power of being honest with myself, I feel that this experience has helped me become a better person as not only have I become more diligent with how I approach conversations and honesty in general, but just how to better understand myself. After partaking in this honesty challenge, I fully recognize the usefulness of being 100% honest and how leaders not only have to be honest externally, but also honest with themselves.