

Integrity. Evolved from the Latin ‘integer’, meaning whole or complete. (as you may know from Math class). In Psychology, in particular drive theory, this wholeness is seen when our actions are in line with our goals. For example you are here, now. You want to go to college. What you do in between determines whether you are acting with integrity – in line with your goals – or not. Taking the steps necessary, doing your work, getting good enough grades, applying to college and for bursaries and so on. When we act this way, we are in harmony, in sync. We feel pride and fulfillment. When we don’t act this way, we feel anxiety, overwhelmed, sad, and filled with shame and regret. Each day we make choices that impact our now and our future. But we can always change our future by how we act now, tomorrow, and the day after that.

In Ethics, integrity is an inner sense of wholeness deriving from a consistency in character – in other words, we consistently act according to our own internal framework of principles, values, and beliefs. Or what philosopher Immanuel Kant calls our worldview. It is our internal moral compass if you will, and it is seen as a virtue. In fact one antonym is hypocrisy. Our worldview is developed through experience and - guess when our worldview is altered and grows the most? When it is challenged – challenged by people with different opinions – challenged by adversity, challenged by our own mistakes and failings.

In both senses, integrity is not rigid – it is fluid and adaptable just like we are. Because it lives in us. So besides opposable thumbs, mankind has two legs up on most other animals in this kingdom – the ability to reflect on our actions and our beliefs and to alter them – the ability to grow, to strive, to be the best human being we can possibly be in just about every situation. To discover and fulfill our life’s purpose on earth. Will we succeed in every single situation? Hell to the NO. That would be perfection – and we all know that perfection is unattainable – soooooo Cosmo and Glamour. The beauty is in the attempt – and the word consistency – as in being and acting with a consistency of character...

In fact, there is no other goal for humankind – we are given one life (well at a time, and that we know of) and we each have one simple mission – Buddhism has several aspects to it – some of which are called Right Speech, Right Action, Right Lifestyle, Right Vocation. And so on – you see the pattern. This Right-ness is integrity – about being integrated – about the integration of consistency in thought, behaviour, will, and goal with the kind of person we want to be, and what we choose to do with our lives to reflect and inject that person into the world. After all, the world deserves us at our best. That is the only way one person can make a difference. Imagine what a difference we could make if everyone always acted with integrity.