A Piercing Insight? Bring It On!

By Penney Peirce

onesty can be tricky. You can tell others what you think or how you really feel, and sometimes that clears things up and starts a great conversation, but sometimes it creates a problem. People have varying abilities—and desires—for hearing truth. And to complicate things even more, truth comes in a variety of versions; all people have their own experience and combination of love and fear, which creates a filter—like sunglasses—that they see life through. What people think is true and who they think they are can vary greatly. So if you tell your own truth, just about yourself, others may be able to hear you with neutral open-mindedness, or they might think you're criticizing them, misinterpreting something that's just about you as if it's all about them.

This becomes even more complicated if you want to share an insight about another person, especially if it has any tinge of negativity. The daughter of a friend of mine, let's call her Kayla, had a good friend in high school who was gradually heading down a dark road. She slowly stopped communicating and laughing, then started dressing in dark clothes and wearing heavy makeup. She didn't want to hang out and started to skip some classes. Their friendship was suffering but Kayla's friend pretended nothing was wrong.

Kayla is a highly intuitive person, though she didn't think about herself that way. Her sensitivity levels were quite high, and she could feel the disturbance under the surface in her friend. But since her friend insisted things were fine and wouldn't talk about anything, Kayla hesitated to say anything either—partly because she hadn't formulated her feelings and observations clearly enough

to herself. So she actually didn't know what to say. Instead, she did something I think is odd, but I realize it's a fairly common reaction. She unconsciously "joined" her friend in her misery. In effect, she "co-miserated" and stopped her own happy, extroverted life to be in some strange sort of sympathy with her friend.

Sometimes secrets can distort even the best intentions.

This took shape in the following way: Kayla began to become depressed. Her mother couldn't figure out what was wrong. She became more silent and withdrawn from her family and, like her friend, began wearing black. She lost interest in her classes and when her family expressed concern, she ignored them or responded with short apathetic answers. This went on for nearly a year until two things happened. Kayla discovered that her friend had started cutting herself—and that scared her. At the same time, synchronistically, her mother decided she and Kayla needed to see a counselor and they started going together.

Luckily, the counselor was intuitive and down-to-earth with good common sense, and she understood many of the hidden levels of what was going on. After some initial resistance, Kayla broke down a bit and shared her fears about her friend. The relief was enormous—which popped a huge balloon of tension! Kayla's ability to be honest about her fears and feelings of helplessness allowed the flow of love and healing to start moving. All the withholding and messy shame had stopped the flow and caused everyone to feel stuck, unhappy, worried,



and self-critical. It's such a common thing that when something doesn't seem quite right, we take it personally, thinking, "It's me that's wrong. What did I do?" Or, "I should fix this."

Now a sequence of events moved forward rapidly. The counselor and Kayla's mother connected with the school counselor, who worked with Kayla's friend and her mother, and Kayla was finally able to confide in her friend about how much she cared and worried about her. It turned out that Kayla's friend had been dateraped by a boy she'd gone out with and was keeping it bottled up out of embarrassment and feelings of low self-esteem. When she was honest, those erroneous feelings were freed and she—and Kayla—and their families—could open back up into some lightness again.

Just because someone might misinterpret you doesn't mean you should hold back from expressing concern or trying to get at the real truth under the surface. Where would we be politically, for example, if we didn't have freedom of the press and investigative journalists who constantly sniff out any lack of transparency in business and government? Where would we be if others believed us every time they asked, "What's wrong?" and we said, "Nothing"?

The motive for honesty comes from the love of the direct path and the real thing. In it, there is a lack of convolution and the absence of distracting, complicating, obscuring tangents. You ask a question and the answer is tagged right on the end of it—right there, waiting. No lag time, no reason you can't have the just-right response right now.

Honesty is related to humility, that simple statement of truth about who you are, what you love, what you observe and know, and what you want to do or create in any given moment. So honesty and humility and simplicity and presence and immediacy and truth are intimately interconnected. The word *honest* actually comes from the same root as *honor*: high respect and esteem, adherence to what is right.

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have."

—Abraham Lincoln

When you're honest, your way of being in the world and showing yourself to others is direct, straight ahead, unadorned with secrets or artifice, and real. There is alignment and harmonious resonance between your personality (with its words and deeds) and your soul (with its compassion, higher wisdom, and sane life plan).

Honest people are easy to understand and easy to love. You can relax around them. It feels safe to be with them because they don't harbor ill will or derail you with clever manipulation or put-downs. Being honest is not difficult—it's remembering all your self-protective mechanisms and puffed-up stories that take energy and effort. Real honesty is *authenticity*.

There is another aspect to being honest, though. It has to do with heart. You can be bluntly honest and rake somebody over the coals—intentionally or unintentionally. This is partly what's behind bullying and cyber-bullying. Something inside bullies isn't connected to their own heart and soul. They need to reduce oth-

ers to feel superior, which is a weird, distorted sense of self—we might call it *ego*. Denial maintains the lie that it's OK to wound others with lies or to wield someone's secrets or vulnerability like a sword.

"All cruel people describe themselves as paragons of frankness."

—Tennessee Williams

At the same time, someone may have a legitimate insight about you that would be helpful to know, in the same way Kayla might have been able to help her friend if she'd been able to penetrate her friend's stone wall of denial. So what if someone has a piercing insight about you? When you're honest with yourself, you remain neutral and consider the idea; feel your way into its possible connection to issues that might be blocking you and sense how deep the insight goes. Accept that the person sharing with you actually does care.

If you have a knee-jerk reaction or get mad, it's a good bet that the insight is on the money. If you become slightly unconscious or go blank when hearing the idea, it's probably also true in some way. Being honest with yourself is a huge part of finding your purpose in life and moving forward to materialize it harmoniously. As you practice being simple, undefended, and honest, at first it takes courage to face the truth. Soon you discover that not being honest and not feeling truth is a kind of torture you just can't stand. So, a piercing insight? Fantastic! Bring it on! What else can I learn about myself and life?

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