

the
integrity
cleansse

YOUR ULTIMATE PATH TO PEACE

DIY WORKBOOK



BY MARTHA BECK

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Martha's Integrity Cleanse	4
What Is Integrity, Exactly?	8
Locating Your Integrity	9
The Importance of Being Present	10
A Short History of the Integrity Cleanse Course	11
Using This DIY Kit	11
Blind Spots & Spring Cleaning	15
Overview	16
This Week's Challenge	23
Keeping Your Motives Pure	27
Overview	28
The Feeling of a Decision Made in Integrity	31
The Feeling of a 'YesNo' Decision	32
Cleaning Up Your Next 'YesNo' Decision	34
This Week's Challenge	38
Integrity in Relationships	39
Overview	40
Telling the Truth to Your Loved Ones	43
Section One: What I Want	44
Section Two: What I've Got	45
This Week's Challenge	53
Staying in the TAO	55
Overview	56
The Gift of Suffering	56
Integrity is Infectious	57
Waiting for integrity	58
This Week's Challenge	69
A Final Word	70

Introduction

Martha's Integrity Cleanse

My Integrity Cleanse began with a restaurant ceiling fan.

Let me rewind. Many of you know that all my self-help methods begin with my own efforts to make myself less miserable. I read self-help books, I try all the techniques, come up with my own, then mix them up and play with them, looking for anything that will work. Along the way, I pick at the tangle of my own weirdness and dysfunction. I've done everything from cognitive behavioral therapy to poking myself in the head while hanging upside down and saying kind words to myself (this was recommended to me by either Caroline Myss or an opossum, I can't recall which).

What I'm trying to say here is that I'll do *anything* to feel better.

I've found some great self-help interventions during all this experimentation. The single best one, hands-down, is The Work™ of Byron Katie, a spiritual teacher who lived through years of deep depression; then had an enlightenment experience that left her in a place of perpetual joy and peace. She has remained free of suffering since this event, which occurred in 1986. Her process is to rigorously question and disprove her own thoughts, and her Work teaches others to do the same. I use her methodology every day

and would emphatically encourage you to discover her work for yourself, if you haven't already.

In the course of time, I was lucky enough to actually meet Byron Katie, and her husband, Stephen Mitchell, whom I consider to be one of the greatest spiritual poets writing in English. There's nothing more wonderful to me than getting to spend time with these masters and pepper them with questions. Once I began doing this, I noticed there was a profound difference between the way Katie chooses her actions and the way I had been choosing mine. Basically, I'd been questioning my thoughts in a way that mired me in hypocrisy. It was an innocent mistake, but watching Katie, I realized it was also a huge one. She lives in utter integrity. I'd been misusing her work to stay out of mine.

I suspect you're using the same kind of mind-tricks on yourself that I was using on myself. Whenever an unpleasant situation arose in my life, I'd question the thought that this was a bad thing. I'd say to myself, "This is *fine*! I will love what is, without alteration. Everything in the world is perfect right now. I'll just adjust to what everyone else wants."

I'd been living this way for a long time. Since most people are kind and courteous, it often worked out beautifully. I loved that. I occasionally encountered people who were cruel and exploitive. No problem; I found a way to love that, too. I thought that was what we were all supposed to do.

Then came my day of reckoning: The Day of the Ceiling Fan.

I was out to dinner with Katie, Stephen, and a few other friends. The hostess seated us at a table directly under a fan, where a strong wind ruffled our hair and clothing. As I grimly adjusted to loving this, Katie shocked me by *saying she wasn't comfortable and requesting that we be moved to a different table.*

Because you are a normal person, this may not shock you. But as a timid people-pleaser, I could barely believe my eyes. It was as if someone had just disproved the theory of gravity. I'd assumed that Katie would sit under a freezing fan and question her thoughts until she felt great with gale-force winds blowing through the linguine.

“Act from integrity. If people get upset, that's when the real fun starts.”

“Why don’t you just sit here and do The Work on ceiling fans?” I asked.

Katie laughed. “That’s not how you use The Work.”

“It’s not?” My mind was being blown not only by the fan, but by Katie’s response. “How do you know when to adjust to a situation and when to change it?”

“You know to do something, and you do it,” said Katie simply.

“Know to do?” I repeated. “What do you mean?”

“It’s like a meditation,” Katie said patiently, like someone trying to explain physics to a Golden Retriever. “It just arises.”

“You mean you do anything that shows up?”

“If it’s in your integrity.”

“But...but what if people get upset?”

“Oh,” Katie beamed. “That’s when the real fun starts.”

I pondered this for a moment. Sure enough, when I got still and checked, I found a part of myself at the very center saying, it would be better not to sit under this fan. Around this quiet, obvious thought clustered a bevy of fears: fear of being demanding, fear of creating conflict, fear of looking entitled, fear of seeming arrogant, fear, fear, fear, fear, fear.

“I’d assumed that Katie would sit under a freezing fan and question her thoughts until she felt great with gale-force winds blowing through the linguine.”

“When people don’t like what’s in your integrity,” Katie told me, “you know where you both stand. Clear and simple. Then you have a real relationship, one based on the truth.”

As we all moved to a more comfortable table, the implications of this began unrolling in my head. According to this new perspective, other people’s negative reactions would show me places where I needed to change, either by behaving in a way that broke the rules of the social system (if the waitress refused to move me, maybe I wouldn’t choose to go to that restaurant anymore), or by questioning the idea that the system wouldn’t change to accommodate me. I mean, what if I asked to move and—if you’re a people pleaser, this will sound crazy—*the waitress was fine with that?* What if no conflict ensued, and no one accused me of being selfish or entitled? I’d have to adjust my whole worldview, and accept that maybe the universe is actually friendlier than I thought.

I became obsessed with Katie’s phrase “*know to do.*” To Katie, “knowing to do” something seemed utterly self-evident. I had no clue what she meant. So I watched and listened and studied the way she moved through the world. Gradually I came to believe that “knowing to do” consists of being completely present and inwardly still, attentive to a benevolent intelligence that occupies the center of every being. This intelligence is your own and yet greater than your own. It rises into attention when there is no conflict from your mind. It is the experience of complete integrity, uncluttered by all mental concepts and socialized reactions.

This catalyzed a major reckoning for me. I saw that I’d been using my own self-help tools to live a life that was out of integrity. I had used them to cover my own fear, to avoid situations where I would have to speak up for myself, or where I might be perceived negatively. I had been coating all this behavior with a virtuous veneer, but really, to put it bluntly, I’d just been cowardly and dishonest.

After the ceiling fan incident, I “knew to do” one thing: begin living in accordance with complete integrity. It wasn’t a virtuous idea; it was motivated entirely by my desire to be as happy as Byron Katie always is. So, I decided that for a month, I wouldn’t do a single thing—neither would I speak, nor would I act—until I was certain it lay within my integrity.

Frequently, over the month—and then months, and then years—that followed, I found myself scared to death. The Integrity Cleanse is like adopting a pet tiger—not something you want to do on a whim. On the other hand, my Integrity Cleanse turned out to be so effective I began to wonder how I’d ever functioned without it. Discovering, speaking, and acting on your truth opens up the whole world. It’s complete freedom. If someone made a drug that felt as good as integrity, I’d be on it. But integrity costs nothing, is immediately accessible, and never runs out. It would be too good to be true, except that it’s too good to be false.

What Is Integrity, Exactly?

One reason integrity is such a powerful concept is that it's simple. There are no baroque moral or ethical details to integrity. It comes from the Latin word *integer*, which we use mathematically to describe a number that's whole—one thing, not divided into fractions. A person of integrity is one thing: one being, at all times and under all circumstances. If you're in integrity, you don't try to spin your image different ways for different people, or give different accounts of the same event. You are who you are, whole and undivided.

By contrast, a person who's in *duplicity* has two faces (for example, the one who flatters you to your face, and the one who insults you behind your back). Most of us live in multiplicity, showing up to please different people or get what we want by playing whatever role we think will give us an advantage. When I was in high school, I used to stop for a moment before going into each class, take a deep breath, and turn myself into whatever would please the teacher. I lived in complete multiplicity. I got straight A's. I also wanted to die (I say that from integrity, not exaggeration). Duplicity or multiplicity can make it easier to get what you want, unless what you want is health and happiness. They suck at that.

Rigidity, in contrast to integrity, is easy: you just memorize the rulebook and you're done. Integrity requires presence and the continuous sensing of what is most just, fair, true, loving. You'll see how those all blend together as you go deeper into integrity. You'll see that you cannot be in integrity without love and you cannot be in love without kindness. Ultimately every true thing is kind and every kind thing is true. And to live in kindness, with yourself and everyone else, is to occupy a gentle universe.

“Ultimately, every true thing is kind and every kind thing is true.”

I believe that the process of accessing integrity opens a channel between you and an enormous power that is always loving you, always trying to help you, always supporting you, always breathing health into your body and your mind. This power adores you. It cares about every worried thought, every momentary risk, every hangnail you might have. By committing to integrity, you're allowing all the love of that power into your life.

Locating Your Integrity

How do we know what is in our integrity? If you're familiar with my work, you know that I sometimes describe human psychology as being divided into two different beings that live within each of us. I call these the essential self and the social self. The essential self is who you're born to be; it's your genetic legacy, your animal self. It's what you really think, feel, know, want. Your essential self is essential in two ways: it is your essence, what you really are, and it's absolutely necessary if you're going to live your right life.

The social self is also necessary because we are, by evolution, social apes. We need to connect with each other. Our sense of safety is intrinsically tied up with our connection with others of our own species. And that means that at moments when our natural impulses differ from the demands of the group (or even one other person) we often abandon our essential selves. In effect, we go blind to our deepest selves to fit in with other people.

“We go blind to our deepest selves to fit in with other people.”

Losing our true selves is so painful it seems insane. (It is.) The reason we do it is simple: fear. We're afraid that what our essential selves want to do will contradict what others want, and then we'll be cut off, cast out, alone. We balk at that before it ever has a chance to happen. For a socially-dependent creature, to disagree feels catastrophic.

So we choose conformity over integrity time after time. Sometimes this takes a very subtle form, such as simply believing what other people say, even if your gut is telling you they're wrong. You'll keep believing whatever will help you fit in, even when you're alone. Every act may be dictated by the imagined reaction of other people to whatever you're doing.

The ability to sense our own integrity diminishes every time we worry what other people are thinking or saying or doing about us. The basic belief that we must think, say, and do whatever other people want is deeply rutted in the brain, a high-speed thoroughfare.

If you decide to join me on the Integrity Cleanse, you'll get back in touch with the still,

small voice of your essential self. This is the part of you that “knows to do.” First you’ll learn to hear this voice, to listen to it above everything else. Then you’ll learn some techniques for doing what your integrity suggests, right out in front of God and everybody.

Martha

Did you enjoy this free sneak peek of the DIY Integrity Cleanse Workbook?

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