

## **Radical Honesty**

Honesty  
honours you,  
opens me.  
It is the golden key  
to unlock  
inner secrecy.  
Vulnerability,  
for you to see,  
full-on  
open heart surgery.  
Revealing all,  
in candid intimacy,  
nothing to hide,  
opening wide,  
seeing inside,  
I find  
I reside  
where I am truly  
ALIVE.

Honesty is a killer; it is the death-wielder for life as it is. We all know that moment of death. Another's honesty is the sword that slices through our ideas and expectations, our masks and our dreams. In the intense moment of honesty's revelation we cannot fail to know what is true. Even though we may try to avoid or escape it the clarity of real honesty pierces the veils of self-illusion. The partner who confesses love of another, the courage of the friend who risks our friendship for the sake of truth, these are honesty's midwives. Real truth telling is painful, for both giver and receiver. We may deflect or deny the moment of truth but if we do, we only fool ourselves. We miss the gift that life is presenting.

The gift of receiving real honesty is to shatter in a moment our illusions of self identity, role or position. The pain we know when faced with honesty is the pain of exposure. Revelation opens both giver and receiver to the vulnerability of the unknown. Real honesty forces us to sit on the knife-edge between the old or the familiar and the opening of the new. Like the clean sharp blade of the surgeon's scalpel, honesty has a purpose. It arrives to cut away that which we have outgrown, to make way for the new.

*For many years I lived with a man I loved deeply. He loved me yet was not drawn to share that love intimately. His honesty to what he knew to be true killed me. I was his accomplice, for I stayed in the fire of deep pain until it was done.*

*It is not easy to live with such honesty; it is death to every want and need, the destruction of any illusion of control. Clearly the question arises 'Why would one stay?'. This was a question I asked myself many times. Yet despite what seemed like free will to leave, there was no choice. I knew this unfulfilled love was the answer to all of my pain; it was the resolution of my heart's healing.*

*As I stayed, the pain I experienced brought a blessing; it made me look within. I had no option. In looking I discovered that no matter which way my mind twisted and turned to make the reality look different, there was no alternative but to face what I was feeling. I could not blame him, for he had been clear with me. If I escaped into fantasy, it was not long before the bubble burst. When hope entered, disappointment followed closely. Challenging as it was to be with this experience, as I delved deep within I found the truth in me knew "This is my place. This is the place of real evolution". I had known this when the truth arose in me to be with him. To transform everything that held me from knowing my own love was my deepest calling. I knew there was no escape, for to run from this experience was to run from myself. So I stayed. And I grew in that field where life had planted me.*

*How does one remain in the house of psychological death? Living in the place of no control, in the ebb and flow of pain, hope and dejection? Honesty is the only answer. Honesty to the deepest heart – the knowing that what I am doing is absolutely real, even though it may appear to be madness.*

*It is not easy to live with such absolute honesty. At times, when the agony of unmet love became unbearable, I thought I must leave. I could not. There was nowhere to go; to leave was to deny every part of me that felt unloved or unwanted, every part that was asking to come home to my heart.*

*Of course life is not always as simple as stay or go, yes or no. Knowing it was true for me to be in this place did not make it easy to stay. Commitment to the transformational process did bring courage, yet at times it was hell. Inevitably there were phases when despite the deep call of my heart to be true, my humanness could not give to that. All I could do at those times was let things be. Knowing I could not make myself let go of my deep love of this man, I found tenderness growing where before there was force of will; compassion became a living reality.*

*Every idea I had about my self, everything I wanted or needed, every concept of love burnt in that fire of deep transformation. Eventually, in that place of psychological death I learnt that in staying with the pain, no matter how fierce, a door opens. It is the door of self love. Finding compassion and tenderness for myself, letting go of self judgment and comparison, I discovered the jewel of my own heart, that which cannot leave me. I found the love I was seeking.*

*Allowing life to carry me deeper into my self, the love in my heart grew. In fact it became all-consuming. My love for that man grew deeper, as did my love of myself and the whole of life. Facing everything – with courage, with deep honesty, with many tears and sometimes with a tornado of emotion that would devastate all in its path - I came to know myself. I found what is true in me, and what is not. I realised this man's honesty honoured me. It was the deepest of loves, for he would not compromise the truth of the heart, that which was needed for my evolution into my fullest potential.*

*This man gave me the greatest of gifts; he broke my heart. When the heart breaks, we die. Yet in the acceptance of death, something changes. At the very least it is some perception we have of life; for me it was the annihilation of every thought, belief and concept about who I am. It was a journey of letting go of what I wanted into a knowing of what really is*

### **The power of honesty - living truth**

Our lives are built on ideas and concepts about who we are, what we have and what we do. These constructs have substance, for we have given them reality. We build and grow them; we become attached to them; we give them life. Without them we do not know who we are. They are the buildings and boxes in which we put ourselves and where we limit our potentiality.

The nature of life is change, constant change; this is the only certainty. Its movement relentlessly threatens aspects of life we cling to. It is constantly asking us to move on, let go, bring in the new. Honesty challenges the constructs we make in life. It presents the opportunity to let go, to evolve as our fullest potential. Life's calling is relentlessly demanding our participation as conscious beings. It asks that we stretch, grow and move on; that we let go of life as it is. Life's tool in this process is honesty. Honesty makes us give up control, to die to who we think we are.

Just like the sharp blade of a scalpel cutting through flesh is painful, the breaking up of what we think is real hurts. The directness of real honesty pierces where we

are holding on; it shatters what we are attached to as identity, role or possession. It is life's way of inviting us to move on. Those places we get stuck or too comfortable need the helping hand of honesty. It encourages fresh perspective and radical change.

There is a gift in honesty's piercing beyond its shattering impact. The question is can we see it? Honesty's gift is to open us to the real, to take us beyond ourselves and our current circumstances. If we learn to receive honesty, or to remain open in the shock of destruction, maybe we can see and experience this opening. To do so requires that we see more than just its personal repercussions; that we remember life's invitation to evolve. Honesty reveals more than the current perspective; it destroys our limitations, challenging us to see the whole picture; to look deeper, to go beyond what we think we know. This is honesty's challenge, for often it is only with hindsight that we see the gift hidden in the bombshell.

To receive the gift in honesty it is vital we become aware of our vulnerabilities – the places we need to protect or defend. No situation is black and white, yet somehow when faced with revelation our tendency is to jump into good and bad, or right and wrong. It is an instant reaction. We defend the exposure of our perceived failings or retaliate to discharge the shock. Habitually we may be quicker to defend ourselves (to be right) or to attack (make the other wrong) than we are to receive honesty. Yet if we can recognise the futility of reaction - that it merely escalates an issue or perceived problem - the potential arises for real transformation. Despite the exposure that activates pain, reaction, or closure, there is another way. If we have the willingness to truly listen and receive; if we can pause; if we can move beyond the tendency to react (or recognise the reaction for what it is – our attempt to hold on to the known) we loosen up energy caught in our fixed perceptions about life. Not taking a position in relation to what has been revealed, the potential is we awaken clarity of awareness.

Honesty finds our Achilles heel. There is real purpose in this experience. Our vulnerable spots tend to act like a beacon to draw the very reflection we seek to avoid. It's as if they have a timer hidden deep within; when we are ready to face what is held in them, along comes someone to push the button. Button pushing is good; it shows us where we are still holding some outmoded perception about ourselves or life. Honesty is the trigger to catalyse evolution; it just takes our willingness to allow the process.

Where the revelation of another's truthfulness is not directly about ourselves but has impact on our lives, the tendency to react through judgment and blame is strong. To deflect the impact of what we may not want to hear, to return its delivery with anger or refusal is understandable. Not only are we faced with the emotions generated by the shock of unexpected disclosure, we are asked to face and accept our innate powerlessness to life. This is the greatest challenge; our illusion of personal control is strong and we do not like to be reminded of our vulnerability. The feeling of being in control is particularly potent when life is flowing our way; in other words, in the way we want or are used to. When we are faced with another's honesty the illusion of that control is shattered, often painfully. We recognise our inability to be in charge of life or to change circumstances where another is concerned. This is a powerful lesson of honesty. The truth is we have no

control really. The only place we can truly claim real power is *in our response* to life.

When we can forego the illusion of control the opportunity arises for us to be in true relationship with each other and with life. Rather than trying to control what happens, we learn to flow with life as it is. Letting go of perceived control opens us to the risk of being fully alive. We recognise that to actualise our fullest potential we have to let go of the reins and open to the whole of life; then pain, joy and every feeling state become the moving flow of experience rather than good or bad, to be avoided or grasped.

Real honesty lies in the full embrace of the moment, whatever it brings. When we embrace the *actual experience* of what is present we do not dilute its potency. We open the potential revelation of honesty's gift. The admission of "I did it because I was afraid of losing you" or "Yes, it was selfish" relieves us of a great burden. The weight of guilt we carry from living dishonestly (not following our inner knowing of what is really true) can be purged in a moment by the simplicity of disclosure. This is true confession; not from a place of "I am bad" but from the honest admission of our humanness and its failings.

When we intellectualise or become emotional about what is happening rather than honestly see what is, there is a price to pay. It is to forego honesty's offering and remain in the comfort zone of the known, seeing a distorted view of life through our personal filters. Deflecting the shock of honesty's wake-up call - the potential to awaken and transform the unconscious within us - we fall back into the sleep of the familiar and comfortable, losing our aliveness. Through resistance we deaden ourselves, numbing the truth or burying that which we are not prepared to face. Refusing to acknowledge what is being offered as a catalyst to the new, we lock parts of ourselves away in some dark corner of the psyche. Here they remain to haunt us; rotting like corpses from the past that we are unwilling to throw away or operating unconsciously, sabotaging our full aliveness.

When we anaesthetise ourselves to what we know to be true (but want to deflect or deny), we dismiss the opportunity to grow. If we are not prepared to own up to where we are being unconscious, or irresponsible, we forego the opportunity to move beyond self denial into new awareness. Where we attempt to deny the effect of another's honesty on ourselves rather than feel the deep pain it opens, we miss the opening to evolve as our fullest potential.

There is no doubt that honesty can be a challenging experience. Just as a spotlight highlights every aspect of an object, honesty's beam shines through the chinks in our armour and reveals what is hidden. This is its purpose. Seeing what is unconscious is the first step to moving on. There is juiciness in being enabled to see oneself in a new light. When we do not judge or resist what we see, but merely see it, we are renewed in the raw vulnerability of uncovering what is. Honesty brings the potential of ending ignorance and self-betrayal; if we allow the opening to take place. Its lesson is the embrace of non-judgment and acceptance for our failings; the potential is that we discover compassion for our humanness. What we cannot see, we cannot evolve. The truth-teller's gift is the power of revelation and

revolution. To claim honesty as a friend is to affirm our commitment to life as evolutionary beings.

### **Knowing the call of the Heart**

There is something uncanny about the innate perfection of life. It knows exactly what we need to wake up to our full-bodied promise. Its delivery is always timely. The question is are we ready to face and embrace that which will bring us greater authenticity as individuals?

Authenticity lies in following our deepest calling. Its voice may be hidden under a weight of responsibilities and busyness yet somewhere we all know the call of the real. We may feel it as intuition or that gut feeling – the smallest of impulses to go a certain way - yet how many of us listen? The pull of what we want or feel we should do is strong; we are conditioned to value logic, reason and imposed standards rather than the whisper within that says, "Come, this is the way". This tiny voice does not conform to expectations. It is the call of the new, taking us into places reason does not see. We deceive ourselves when we disregard it. How many of us with hindsight say, "I knew but I didn't listen"? It takes a deep love of truth to acknowledge and live from what that impulse demands or inspires. To follow its call heralds the birth of real inspiration. It opens us to the magic and mystery of life, the unplanned for and the shocking. At some level we know this and we are drawn, yet the call to deny our inner knowing through fear of what it may bring is compelling.

In the place of real honesty, all ideas of morality, duty, right or wrong fall away. We recognise this inner knowing as the voice of our deepest heart, that which demands our evolution. The deepest heart is the knower of truth. It honours and holds the whole of life as sacred. It serves through love in action. When we open ourselves to its impulse, when we truly listen and act from that place, we come into alignment with destiny. We let go of our rules about how life should look; in the experience of life's unknowability we are truly alive. It is *the edge*, where we freefall into the pure joy of being fully alive on this Earth.

In the simple honesty of this moment we know what is real. We know if we love, or if we do not; we know if we are protecting, defending or holding a position. Even the most complex situation looked at in honesty (in other words, looking at the facts without personal agenda) reveals itself clearly. If we own up to ourselves where we want life to be a particular way, there is a potential we can see life *as it is*. When we see life as it is, its flow expands beyond our agenda; without having to think about it, worry or work it out we can see where we need to act and in what way, or where we need to wait, where we need to speak and where to remain silent. When we keep life simple, when we get out of our own way, it becomes easy to see how to fully live and love.

*I didn't want to go but I felt I had to. I needed money and life had presented me with a job; six weeks as a live-in holiday nanny for three small children. It seemed the perfect solution to my predicament, if I looked with my mind. Yet some quiet place in me was saying "No. Don't go. Stay in this place where you are loved.*

*Trust life." But where I was loved meant insecurity, vulnerability and no control. I wasn't quite ready to listen deeply and so I went.*

*I tried to surrender to being where I did not want to be. The children were demanding, the parents disconnected from each other and from me. The resistance in me to being there was strong. Christmas Day arrived; the family left for lunch at grandparents. I was left alone with a frozen dinner my companion. What was I doing here? I asked.*

*That question was answered almost before I knew it. As I bent to take my food out of the freezer I found I could not move. Pain tore through my body. My back had seized.*

*Tentatively I slid down the freezer onto the stone floor. Every movement was agony. Half an hour later I had managed to get onto carpeted floor. I lay still for hours, unable to move without crying out in pain. When the family returned, after a call to the doctor and a dose of painkillers, I was able to get into bed. There I stayed for a week. I returned home after just two weeks to find a local job offer sitting on my doormat.*

This story of dishonesty to the heart is significant. It shows us to look deeper than the issue and its apparent solution on the surface of life. Patterns of conditioning in us direct us to cause and effect, problem and solution, rather than to a deeper truth of life. At this time the deepest calling in me was to stay put and do nothing. I heard life's call to rest but I chose to put dishonesty (listening to fear, heeding the need to control) first. Yet I could not avoid what I needed to experience. The injury to my back catapulted me into a deep vulnerability to life on every level that I could not escape. In that experience, the flow of where I needed to be *within myself* found its course despite the circumstances being different. Yet we do not need life's path to be so difficult. In dropping our wilfulness of *thinking we know* the direction of life, in pausing and truly listening within, we may discover that life is not a problem to be solved but an adventure to be fully enjoyed.

We lose touch with ourselves through not listening to the heart's deepest calling in the moment. When we *decide* to move from a place of anything other than the knowing of what is truly real, we dishonour not only ourselves but the whole of life. In our arrogance of thinking we know it all, we close the space for the magic of the unexpected to take place, or for those around us to grow through their own life challenges. When we have the humility to see the signs, to action with clarity of intent, or to listen, wait and allow, right action unfolds naturally.

Of course at times it feels easier to follow the groove of the old pattern that always gives to others (then feels resentful), or that moves from fear rather than true direction, or that does not speak for fear of disapproval. This is when we must be vigilant. If we truly want to evolve in authenticity, our responsibility is to live from the integrity of the moment. Although it may seem easier to follow the old groove, if we do, we will pay for it somewhere. In ignoring our deepest pull to truth, even in the smallest elements of our lives, we become cut off from our innermost knowing, deadened to our own aliveness.

In the honesty of staying true to the heart there is a great well of love. When we drink deeply of this well, our cup of love is full; we are nourished deeply and overflow in that love. We may think we know where love is needed but we cannot see the whole picture. Nothing is as it seems. Our ideas about what another might need are precisely that, ideas - for our perception of self and other is warped by our own history or beliefs. It is only when we bring openness to our inner world and the vulnerability of enquiry to our expression that the door of the heart opens. Then the potential is clear seeing. As if by magic, when we drop what we think we know, an authentic way of being opens. From that place we can flow in action. Life just happens, for we are not in its way with our ideas about how things should look.

The practice of honesty is self responsibility. Responsibility means response-ability; responding with ability to life. Staying true to the deepest heart is taking full responsibility, starting with oneself.

Listening deeply within and keeping life simple is the way of responsibility; in other words, always coming back to how *I am being or what I am doing*, not what others are doing to me. It is easy to blame another for what we think is wrong with life. Our whole society is based on this false premise of find someone to blame. Yet if we look with honesty we can see everything in life comes back to the individual. We cannot control what takes place in life, or how others act, but we can be in command of how we are with life, how we action and respond to what it presents. There is great power in this awareness. In claiming such responsibility we begin to take up our full birthright as individuals. Being in touch with the heart then enables us to relate with others from a real place of deep connectedness with ourselves.

## **Revealing all**

It is our interactions with another that bring both the greatest challenge and the deepest potential for love. It is here that we find both the juiciness of life and the deepest pain. When we are truly in touch with ourselves, we are able to see where we commune or how we fail to touch others. We get to see our holding back through fear of being hurt, our inability to receive and our selfishness.

Inviting another into the place of true communion through honesty takes courage and openness. We are revealing our heart, asking the other to see and acknowledge who we are, standing in the openness of honest giving. Here we truly step onto the edge. It is a vulnerable place. Can we let down our defences? Risk the wounding that may occur? This is what life asks if we are to know the greatest love. If we can stand on that edge *despite* the fear in our hearts, the gifts we receive are great. The potential arises for the open-hearted communion with another that is the very purpose of our existence.

*Life had brought me a new housemate. Young and vibrant, creative and articulate, particularly with men, Ali was a beautiful young woman. She pushed every button of inferiority in me. I found it incredibly painful to be around her, yet there was also a deep connection with this young woman. Our journey had brought us together in service of a spiritual teaching. Life had brought us together to drop deeper into the truth of woman and her many faces.*

*One winter's morning, I was walking in the park. I was struggling to deal with the mental turmoil that was my daily reality in living with Ali. Enjoying the sharpness of the cold air on my face and the starkness of the trees in their winter garb, the tears rolling down my face were the manifestation of that struggle. Unable to contain the inner turmoil, I sat on a bench and sobbed. The clear rippling waters of the river were a potent reflection of my state. They flooded through my heart. As I allowed the pain to penetrate me a voice spoke to me from the deep. "To compare is odious" it said. I saw my life flash before me. How could I compare the places I had been with the fresh and lovely beauty of this young woman? I saw what they had brought me. Great strength and courage, compassion and wisdom were the gift of such experience. Her beauty was of a different kind, innocent and tender in its freshness.*

*I knew I had to speak with Ali of my insight; honest communication was the only way through this. Feeling deeply vulnerable, I shared my feelings of inferiority and what my heart had revealed. Ali's response was surprising. She had been experiencing the same feelings of inferiority as I. Seeing the mature and magnificent beauty of woman in me, she had felt small and insignificant to my presence. I had felt threatened by her innocence. As we shared in the candidness of the heart's deepest honesty, we saw the divisiveness of the mind's comparison and the unity of ourselves as woman in her different phases of life. How we laughed at the mind's craziness. In our open sharing we initiated a way of being together that honoured both difference and unity. We became true sisters.*

If we cannot share from this tender place of honesty when it arises, we are rejecting one of the great opportunities of life; to blast through the illusions of separation and truly commune with another. Life brings us pain or discomfort in our relationships precisely to open up these great gateways of love. When we go through them with courage we can find our heart's mirror in another. Surely that is why we are here, to know love through such tender and intimate expression?

When we are deeply honest with our companions on life's journey we are saying "I honour you." We are removing the masks, letting go the roles and defences. What we give, being direct and from the core, leaves no room for misinterpretation. It is clarity and it sparkles, even when it delivers the death blow. This is why we may laugh when faced with another's candour, for the pure joy of receiving the truth. Or honesty may be tender, vulnerable and heartfelt, opening the way for intimate communion with another beyond the place of reaction and conflict.

Even if another is not open to honesty, somehow through our own openness and clear perception, something changes. We can action from a new place. We find ourselves free to move on. Knowing there is nothing we can do to change another we give them the freedom to be themselves. This perspective changes everything, making way for the new. This is where the mystery takes over, for in risking all for the sake of truth, we invite the unknown into our lives.

Deeply honest communication cultivates the spirit of co-operation. Delivered without the need of being right, or of making another wrong, presented with the intention of serving the situation and all in it rather than purely personal agenda, it has great power. We all know the resistance encountered through confrontation

with aggression or judgment; it meets itself at the door. Resistance meets resistance; anger fuels anger or closure; judgment cultivates defence. Whereas when we move from an open mind and heart, resolution naturally arises, for nothing gets in its way. Openness encourages the unexpected solution, the unprecedented communication and those 'ah ha' moments when everything suddenly falls into place.

When we are truly open to life, we know love within, experienced in the simple beauty of this life and sometimes directly in communion with another. We may experience this as feeling good about ourselves or about life, or we may simply experience this as a feeling of rightness. This good or rightness is not a surface feeling but a deeply felt knowing that no matter what appears to be happening, there is rightness in it. We know there is a purpose to life; we know we are evolving. Facing ourselves with honesty is the key to this knowing.

Honesty is the key to love. Embracing honesty, we discover tenderness and compassion as the greatest companions. Life's invitation to us all is to take the journey to love within. In finding love within, we may discover it in the whole of life. This is our evolution, to know ourselves and each other as undivided love.

Love's primary vehicle on this earth is honesty – gut wrenching honesty. When we live in utmost honesty we risk all. To risk all for the deepest truth of the heart is life-changing.