

TRUTH

The effort to escape from truth is the father of anxiety. Consider the man who lies awake at night wondering whether his chest pains are the result of indigestion or heart trouble. If he fears going to a doctor to find out, he is carrying a burden he may not have to carry at all. Even if he finds that it IS his heart, he is free to deal with reality and take precautions that may save his life. Truth has not hurt, but healed.

A world where truth does not shine is a world filled with fog and cobwebs, a gray miasma through which we run blind and lost and terrified, tripping over roots we do not see, dodging the threat of looming shapes, remaining separated from our fellows in the dripping, fear-filled darkness.

The world of truth is the world of what is, the world of the Spanish line tree outside my window, wearing sunshine like a halo. It is the room I sit in, the sleeping kitten, the job that must be done, the pleasure to be had or planned. It is here. It is now. It is what is. It is my world, my truth, my reality, and in it I am no longer "a stranger and afraid/In a world I never made."

True, this world of mine contains ingredients I do not like - pain, grief, anger, fear, tragedy. But these are the things I must accept, because they are part of the totality and I cannot change them. I wasted years escaping into the unreality of alcoholism. Until I faced the truth that I could not drink, I was alone in the fog and the silence.

Before I learned to love truth, I had to learn to recognize it. Truth is not an immutable absolute, a granite peak, eternal, unmoving, hiding its head in a nimbus of clouds. Truth is a ballerina tracing arabesques in a pattern of color and music, ever-changing, harmonious.

Truth is totality: question-and-answer, nail-and-hammer, inside-and-outside. It is never narrow or sectarian. It is not blind, because its own radiance banishes obscurity.

Truth is multifaceted, because it is reality. Your truth and mine are different, because we are different. Your beliefs are your truth, as mine are mine. When that is accepted, any cause for conflict between us is resolved. Neither of us is right or wrong. We simply hold different pieces of the incredible jigsaw puzzle of life, and each piece has its place.

Truth is immediate. What was true yesterday is no longer true today, and tomorrow is not born yet. Today - now - is truth. What is happening all over the world at this moment is truth, and no part is "truer" than any other part. We are all equal shareholders in reality. For an individual or group to believe he or it has captured the whole truth is absurd.

When truth is so beautiful, why do we embrace the lie? As a practicing alcoholic, I escaped into non-truth because I felt ill-equipped to cope with reality. And yet the "reality" I perceived was a lie, too. I was escaping from one lie to another, seeming more pleasant. Because I felt, sober, that I was unlovable, ugly, awkward, and flawed, surrounded by hostile strangers who were devoting their entire attention to spotting my inadequacies, I got drunk. Then, for a while, I felt confident and safe enough from others to enjoy them and myself. Is it any wonder that I fought against returning to the ugly "reality" that sobriety seemed to offer?

In one way is truth an absolute: WITHOUT IT, THERE CAN BE NO GROWTH. Truth is to inner space what sunshine is to a garden. In its absence, fear flourishes and imagination runs riot, conjuring up pursuing monsters where there are only paper dragons. I wonder why it takes so long to realize that nightmares can never be outdistanced, simply because THEY DO NOT EXIST. Unreality cannot be coped with precisely because it is unreal. Only when we open our minds and hearts to the truth can we expose our paper dragons for what they are - a child's forgotten toys.

Truth liberates. Truth heals. Truth unlocks the door to the glory of reality, and gives us the means to live in harmony with reality. In return, it asks only that we surrender all lies and illusions and love what is. Why do we wait so long?

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