

the
Integrity
advantage

STEP INTO YOUR **TRUTH**,
LOVE YOUR LIFE,
AND CLAIM YOUR **MAGNIFICENCE**

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sounds true
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1

A New Definition of Integrity

In most standard dictionaries, there are two definitions of integrity:

- 1 The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles
- 2 The state of being whole and undivided

For the first forty years of my life, I was only familiar with the first definition of integrity: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. Strong moral principles, I knew all about those; I was brought up by an Italian Catholic mother. She had a clear and strong sense of “right” and “wrong” and made sure to pass those concepts along to her three children. Being the youngest, and seeing my brother and sister punished for doing anything “wrong,” I decided early on to take the path of “doing it right.” My good-girl, overachiever persona was cemented before I hit first grade. I clung to my checklist of life, exceeding every goal and milestone I set. I showed up 100 percent and produced beyond expectation. When I became an attorney, that sealed the deal—I was a fighter for justice and truth. I, like so many others, wore *what I believed* to be my integrity like a badge, proof of my perfection.

From Shadow to Light

I did not become aware of the second definition of integrity until I met an incredible woman named Debbie Ford.

You may not be familiar with Debbie’s work, but you will be after you read this book. She changed my life in so many ways, and I would not be what or who I am today if she hadn’t come into my life.

Before her death from cancer at age fifty-seven in 2013, Debbie was a *New York Times* bestselling author, powerful speaker, radio host, workshop leader, and founder of The Ford Institute. A trailblazer in the world of personal growth, she was known for her expertise on something called “the human shadow”—what we deem unacceptable, have shame around, or just don’t want to be. She was on the forefront of bringing the light of awareness to the parts of ourselves we keep hidden in the dark. In other words, she supported people in looking at themselves and their lives through new eyes, so they could break free from the prison of their past and stories of lack and limitation and create the life of their dreams. Debbie also created a life-changing program called The Shadow Process. It is a weekend-long workshop where participants learn to embrace all aspects of themselves. They discover how to own their smallest, weakest self as well as their strongest, brightest light and bask in the glow of unprecedented self-love and acceptance.

I did lots of transformational work before I met Debbie—I read books and recited affirmations, attended workshops, and posted mantras on my bathroom mirror. I attended rebirthing ceremonies, sweat in sweat lodges, had my aura cleansed by Indian shamans, and went to more psychics and astrologers than I care to list. I was looking for someone to fix me or give me answers! Although I encountered all kinds of wisdom, the shifts in my life still felt fleeting. I would make progress for a bit and then slip back into my old habits. When I first attended The Shadow Process Workshop, I saw my life in a radically different way. Instead of being the victim of my past experiences, I began to understand how they all came bearing gifts. There was wisdom in the wounds I had accumulated along the way, and I could either use everything that happened in my life, or it would use me.

Not only did my past experiences come bearing gifts, but so did the parts of myself that I had always seen as bad or imperfect. I had always felt the pressure to be perfect. I had spent my entire life striving to be smart, successful, talented, creative, and funny. In my mind, there was no way I could be weak, needy, selfish, vulnerable, or stupid. If I were, no one would love me. All those parts of myself, that were completely human and natural, were shut off. Instead, I kept perfecting

and perpetuating my persona of the good girl, the strong, independent, has-it-all-under-control perfectionist and overachiever.

You may think, why would I want to be in touch with my weakness, neediness, selfishness, and stupidity? What is wrong with shutting those parts off?

The problem is, when we cut ourselves off from our whole being, we end up stunted, overcompensating for what we think we lack, and become extreme versions of certain characteristics. We risk becoming caricatures instead of complete, human, people. You can see this happening throughout society. Imagine the person who becomes a workaholic. They have no balance. They are run by their need to succeed and completely cut off from their ability to rest or be lazy. There is a time for everything in this life. There is a time for weakness; there is a time for laziness. There is a time for anger. In this book I'll show you how to access the entirety of yourself and understand the gifts each part can bring when you allow it to emerge at the right moment.

Because I was a perfectionist and overachiever, I was completely driven by my head and cut off from my heart. Things needed to make sense to me. It had to look good on paper or from the outside. That's why I could ignore all the signs about my husband. Our marriage made sense. It seemed like it *should* have worked. Never mind the way my heart felt in the presence of obvious disregard, incompatibility, and conflict. My head won out every time.

When I encountered The Shadow Process, I realized how much I sacrificed by living from my head and not my heart. It opened my eyes to how destructive it is to be completely detached from essential parts of ourselves and our feelings.

It planted the seed of what it might be like to live in integrity.

You see, the shadow represents the parts of ourselves we want to reject. Fearing that others will find out that at our core we possess "negative" qualities, we whittle away at those parts and create facades and personas to prove that we are not the things we dislike. This takes us out of integrity because it moves us further away from that second definition I mentioned: the state of being whole and undivided. Here are examples of how this can play out:

- The person who feels unworthy becomes a people pleaser. They do everything for others to prove to the world and themselves how worthy they are. They are completely shut off from their own needs, since underneath their facade they don't feel deserving enough to do anything for themselves.
- The person who feels unlovable or flawed because their parent abandoned them becomes the charmer, making sure that they are accepted and valued by all people. They are like bottomless pits when it comes to trying to fill themselves up with love and validation from others. Their belief that they are unlovable prevents them from giving themselves the love they need.
- The person whose parents came to America from another country and went from being well-to-do to poor becomes bent on not only fitting in but in showing the world how fabulous their life is with outward accoutrements like big houses and fancy sports cars. Their total sense of self is based on what is external since they never again want to feel the shame of lack.
- The child who is brought up more like a “trainee” than a kid has their list of activities, is overscheduled, and is pressured to excel in all things. Their need to be strong, independent, and special drives them. On the outside they look like they have it all together; on the inside they are suffering from anxiety and panic attacks.

When we feel incomplete and divided, we look outside ourselves for validation, but when we search outside ourselves for what we need, we end up living a life that is not *in*, but rather, is *out* of integrity. Until we face what we consider unfaceable, those parts of ourselves where we feel deficient are driving us.

Although the shadow is hidden, it is in charge!

The qualities we deem inappropriate or unacceptable aren't the only things we disown. We also disown our *light*—all of those magnificent qualities that we admire in others but do not believe could ever be inside us. Many of us are so used to the constant chorus of criticism and condemnation in our brains, a continuous, 24/7 soundtrack of negative thoughts, that it wouldn't dawn on us that we have everything within us that we truly seek. It doesn't seem possible.

For many of us, it is harder to own our brilliance, beauty, uniqueness, sexiness, and overall magnificence than it is to own our dark. We have been telling ourselves negative stuff for years, and we've been believing it. The positive stuff is harder to accept and own. It's like in the movie *Pretty Woman* when Richard Gere's character tells Julia Roberts' character that she could be more than a hooker, saying, "I think you are a very bright, very special woman." And she replies, "The bad stuff is easier to believe. Did you ever notice that?"

Enter Debbie

Before I went through The Shadow Process, I was cut off from many of my positive traits. Although I had accomplished a great deal in my life, I would never have said I was brilliant, successful, sexy, or creative. In fact, according to my upbringing, if I had *tried* to own those parts of myself, I would have been labeled a show-off and punished. Owning my light instead of seeing it as something to be ashamed of propelled me into a whole new level of confidence and consciousness. It was only then that I could access the power within me to leave my marriage.

Needless to say, The Shadow Process and the work of Debbie Ford catapulted me into a new calling in life. I immediately signed up to be trained and certified as an Integrative Life Coach. Eager to share the gift of liberation I had received, I immersed myself in my new vocation and became one of Debbie's most successful coaches. She invited me to join her staff. Before long, I was leading trainings and writing content for new programs. As Debbie's cancer took a toll on her body, and her energy began to wane, she gave me more and more responsibility. Soon we developed a close friendship. In fact, we spent a week together in

December 2012, shortly before she died. Although she had little energy at times, I thought it was a good sign that she was still buying expensive shoes. She planned to stick around long enough to wear them!

Soon after the New Year she was hospitalized. And then, even though she returned home, it became a possibility, even to Debbie, that she might never be able to get out of bed again. During her moments of strength, she started phoning the people she loved. I sensed she needed closure.

My turn came on February 9, 2013, at 9:40 p.m. I was in New York City visiting my daughter when “Debbie Home” flashed on my cell phone screen. Knowing that she was making these phone calls, and having missed my chance when she had called a few days earlier, I bolted out of a noisy restaurant to find a quiet place to have this important conversation.

As soon as I answered and heard Debbie’s voice, I smiled. She sounded good, strong, like her vibrant self. How could she be dying?

She was eager to chitchat about my trip and my daughter. She asked about what we were doing and whether I liked my daughter’s new boyfriend, declaring, “Next time, I want to come meet him.” Part of me believed there *would* be a next time, but part of me knew she couldn’t even sit up in bed. On the surface, it seemed a normal conversation, like so many others. Inside, I was aching for her to tell me something profound—some sage advice from a mentor to her student or some personal insight from one dear friend to another, but I knew not to selfishly spoil this normal moment. Debbie wanted to be my confidante instead of my dying friend, so I let her talk.

Finally, there was a pause. She had to catch her breath, and then she launched into the second part of the conversation: “Kelley, when I am gone, the vultures are going to come out. I want you to protect us from the vultures.” I gulped. I didn’t want to talk about when she was gone, but I had never heard her use the word *vulture* before, so I knew what she needed to say would help her to be at peace.

Debbie had written nine books and created an amazing body of work. She wanted it to live on, remain true and pure, and continue to impact the lives of thousands. She also wanted to make sure that I

knew what her living wishes were—to safeguard the integrity of her legacy and make sure that those she loved and trusted would be able to carry on her work as she envisioned it. The fact that she saw me as part of that plan left me humbled, yet the reality that we were even discussing it left me nodding silently as tears rolled down my face.

Her breathing grew heavier and her voice fainter, yet she kept repeating, “It’s all about integrity. You need to protect the integrity of the work. You need to stand in being the integrity holder.”

“Of course, Debbie,” I said, assuring her that I would do everything I could to protect her work and keep it alive in the world. I could tell she was tired and needed to go. We said our “I love yous,” and she promised to call me in a few days.

I never spoke with Debbie again. She transitioned a week later.

As part of her final wishes, Debbie left the legacy of The Ford Institute equally to me and Julie Stroud, a fellow staff member and Debbie’s executive assistant. I was deeply touched and incredibly scared to be given this much responsibility, but I knew Debbie had trusted me with it for a reason.

Many people described their last conversations with Debbie and the advice she had given them as a final gift. Sometimes she’d said, “Go ahead and marry him! Stop waiting!” Or other times she’d advised people on their careers. I hated to admit it, but at times I felt cheated. I wanted her to have guided *me* in our last phone call. Why didn’t she tell me, “Marry that man”? Why didn’t she tell me what we needed to do to run The Ford Institute and lead The Shadow Process? Why didn’t she tell me, “*You are going to be okay!*”?

A few months later, I realized that she *had* told me what to do. She told me *exactly* what to do. I needed to step into the work she had always seen for me—the integrity holder!

A New Definition

It has been a few years since Debbie’s passing, and turbulence and triumphs have ensued. There have been more growing pains and growth spurts than I thought possible. It has been a daunting undertaking

and an amazing opportunity to try to sustain the legacy of someone so important, influential, and loved, while also determining the next path for her organization, respecting her grieving family and close friends, and trying to stay true to myself throughout this time! I have come face to face with more of my shadows and have had to delve that much deeper into the work I deliver for the fortitude and insight I need to stay clear and to connect with what comes next.

Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist Carl Jung is credited with saying, “I would rather be whole than good.” The goal of doing shadow work is wholeness—owning all our characteristics, emotions, and experiences. Yet since that first workshop, after working with thousands of people and observing my own challenges and metamorphosis, I have come to realize that there is more to integrity than wholeness; you must take the next step of learning to live tuned in to the guidance of your whole being. Not only do you need to claim that you are full and complete, but also you must create your life from that vibration.

Being out of integrity means that something is off. What we are doing on the outside is not aligned with how we feel on the inside. Our life is not in line with who we are. It is filled with other people’s wants and desires, things we think we “should” be doing, or stuff that doesn’t mean anything to us. A life that is out of integrity means a life that feels incongruous, out of alignment, inauthentic—off.

We make decisions based in lack instead of wholeness, fear instead of truth, and in the confines of our comfort zone instead of the vastness of our grandest vision.

When I understood that, I saw the connection between wholeness, truth, and vision and the new definition of integrity:

- If we cannot own that we are whole and complete, we are out of integrity.
- If we are stepping over our truth, we are out of integrity.
- If we are not living in the vision of our heart’s desires, we are out of integrity.

My new definition of integrity became this:

Integrity is owning all of who we are and living in alignment with our deepest truths and grandest desires.

That's right. Step one was what Debbie was tackling with shadow work. And we'll cover a lot of that here. But there is another level to living in integrity—it is learning to live in alignment with our deepest truths and grandest desires.

It's time to get back in touch with your inner GPS. To live an integrity-guided life means that you stop looking outside yourself for validation, for guidance, for meaning, and for love.



Integrity isn't something you decide to do. It isn't someplace you get to. It isn't a badge or title you wear. Defining and living in your integrity isn't about achieving a goal or doing anything and expecting some reward—although you will achieve more than you ever thought possible and feel completely content. Ultimately, integrity is not defined by a state of *doing*. Integrity is a state of *being*. Integrity is not a result or destination, but a way of life.

There's a saying I love based on the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying. Who you are *being* is your integrity. It isn't our actions, words, and achievements that define our life or our integrity; our state of being defines our integrity, and our actions, words, and achievements are a manifestation of that state of being. Owning that our beingness is whole and complete, and stepping into that, we feel deserving enough to live in our deepest truths and in the light of our grandest desires. This fuels us in a way that we never thought possible. You'll find yourself on the top of your to-do list when it comes to taking actions and making choices, not wondering what others need, but what feels right to you.

Everything that we need is inside us. I'm going to show you how to find it. We've got to understand a few things first.