

## Honesty

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My right front tooth is upright and cavity-free, a smooth incisor that chews without complaint. I floss and brush and pick at it each morning and night. Then I protect it with fluoride to waylay an infection that could lead to a dreaded root canal.

Honesty is a great concept, but the truth can hurt, sometimes as much as a periodontal scraping upon exposed nerves. If we show up and speak our truth, others might not listen or might not like it. Worse, they could use it against us, tarnishing our reputation like brown rotting teeth (and those are the teeth that haven't yet fallen out). Getting others to tell us directly what they did and their honest motivations can be worse than pulling teeth.

Honestly, I've never pulled a tooth, though I've had many of my teeth pulled. Evasive comments and little white lies live just below gum surface, slowly rotting the root.

What is honesty anyway? Seen from one direction a situation looks one way, though it might seem quite different the next day when something else is uncovered. Did I lie yesterday or today, or a bit each day? Maybe white lies are like that bit of decay just below the gum line that be seen only with an x-ray.

Honesty was a great value in my family, passed on from grandparents to mother to me. Did I need to hear my childhood dentist be honest with me, "You won't ever get boyfriends unless you brush your teeth better?" I skirted that problem by being attracted to girls, though the sting of it lives in memory. They didn't have good anesthetic back in the 1950's. Last time when I went to the dentist I got an extra half a dose of anesthetic, put in my earbuds and distracted myself with a podcast. We must shield ourselves from some of the pain of life.

Honesty is one of the Buddhist precepts, the training to live an ethical and happy life. Being honest and forthright in our lives is quite complicated. I used to have a well-developed ability to speak of my partner avoiding all pronouns, and a kind of radar that knew when I'd best use this skill. Since the Supreme Court decided I could marry, it's fun to talk about my wife just like heterosexuals do.

Oh, I am sorry, I miscalculated. That right upper tooth is an implant. I love that it looks like a real tooth and I honestly forgot that it's an implant.