

## HOW TO HANDLE INTEGRITY GLITCHES

By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

According to YourDictionary.com, integrity is defined as:

1. the quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; wholeness; entirety;
2. the quality or state of being unimpaired; perfect condition; soundness;
3. the quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity.

Our working definition of “integrity” comes from Drs. Gay & Kathlyn Hendricks and includes four basic principles:

1. Emotional literacy (the ability to know what emotions you are feeling and to communicate about them in a clear, non-blaming way)
2. Conscious communication (the ability to listen generously and to speak unarguably)
3. Healthy responsibility (the ability to shift from defensiveness and blame to wonder and learning)
4. Impeccable agreements (the ability to make and keep clear agreements and change agreements that aren't working).

Living in integrity promotes a feeling of wholeness, within one's own self and within one's relationships. For more about the Four Pillars of Integrity see [www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm](http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm).

Integrity “glitches” are anything that break that sense of wholeness. They can be as small as saying you will meet someone at 6 and not getting there until 6:15, or withholding some emotion or fact from someone, or as big as breaking trust with someone.

When an integrity “glitch” happens people often want an apology. We actually don't recommend apologies with people who you want to be close to. Apologies are often a way to try to get people to stop being upset. We do recommend expressing genuine regret, if in fact you feel it.

Here are the steps that we recommend in dealing with integrity “glitches”.

1. **Face and acknowledge what actually happened** to all concerned parties. A simple, “I didn't do what I said I would do” or “I didn't tell you XXX” is enough. Apologies may make one or both of you feel better in the short term, BUT in the long term, they make one of you right and the other wrong and don't address the integrity “glitch” itself.
2. **Take responsibility for what happened**, letting go of excuses, justifications, and defenses. Ask yourself, “What does this issue remind you of from the past?”; “How do I keep this issue going in the present?” and “What can I learn from this?” Consider, whether integrity “glitches” is one of your patterns of self-sabotage.

3. **Listen to the responses and feelings from others**, hearing them out. Allow others to have their feelings and to express them. Don't try to control people's feelings. If you have broken an agreement or withheld information, others may be angry with you. Allow them to express their anger. If you really care about someone, you need to accept all of his or her emotions.
4. **Feel your emotions** and communicate what is true for you, without blaming yourself or others. Concentrate on the core emotions of anger, fear or sadness. Ride the wave of feelings and let the concerned parties know. Again, communicate that simply, "I feel sad that I wasn't at the performance" or "I feel scared and am imagining that you won't trust me in the future". Communicate your emotions in an honest way without justification or blame.
5. **Decide what can be done to address the consequences.** Once you have listened to the responses and feelings of others, there is often something that needs to be done to heal what happened. If it is something you agree to do, do it.
6. **Handle the source of the integrity "glitch" so it doesn't repeat.** This is the most important step of all. Look at how the integrity "glitch" happened. Identify your learning edge (see number 2 above) and re-commit to learning.

*Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Psychotherapy. They are a couple who help couples learn life-changing skills and create closer, more loving relationships with one another. To learn more, see [www.marleneandbob.com](http://www.marleneandbob.com) or call 613-594-9248 to arrange a complimentary 1-hour introductory session.*