



STORY 11

TELLING THE TRUTH

*The truth which has made us free
will in the end make us glad also.*

~Felix Adler (1851-1933)

One of the most important lessons I am learning in this lifetime is the importance of expressing my truth and allowing others to express theirs without judgment. Years ago I attended a workshop called Loving Communications. It taught the concept, “all truths are true.” By this they meant, when a person is expressing something from their heart, whether or not it resonates as your truth is not the issue. Their expression is their truth. It is valid for them and deserves to be heard. With this understanding I can be tolerant, non-emotional and non-judgmental when discussing belief systems with others. I can fully hear them and at the same time be the observer and detach from emotional involvement in their truth.

Expressing my own truth has been a more difficult lesson for me, however. When Victor and I entered into our wonderful relationship we took only one vow. It wasn't a vow of undying love or a vow we would be there for each other for eternity. It was a vow to always express our truth, even at the expense of possibly hurting the other person's feelings.

On the surface, this vow appeared to be a simple one to keep. I have always prided myself in being honest — not lying. However, expressing one's truth not only means "not lying," it also means "not withholding." I have always been really good at withholding. When something is bothering me, I can opt to not hurt the other's feelings and bottle up my emotions like a pro. Now I found myself in a situation where I was expected to reveal my emotional reactions to what was going on in our relationship. I had not been in an intimate relationship in ten years, and in my first marriage (of twenty years) neither my husband nor I ever discussed our feelings. Needless to say, there were many adjustments to be made in this new relationship.

I do not like to cause upsets or to be caught up in emotional turmoil, so my first inclination had always been to "keep silent" when something was bothering me. However, Victor could always sense when something was going on and if I didn't disclose forthrightly what was bothering me, he would remind me of our vow! I realized this was not going to be as easy as I had thought it would be. During the first few months as we adjusted to each other, there were several times when we both wondered if the relationship would survive.

One incident happened early in our relationship and illustrates how we met this truth-telling vow head-on. Victor had been a single father for many years and was used to cleaning up the kitchen. I felt so fortunate to have attracted a man with this attribute. However, one small habit he had really bugged me. I did not want to

mention it to him because it was such a little thing and I thought it would make me seem ungrateful for all his help in the kitchen.

One morning as we were cleaning up I noticed he had done it again — this little thing that bugged me. With my back to him, I let out a small frustrated sigh and Victor immediately asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” I said through clenched teeth.

There was a moment of silence between us before Victor said, “I thought we had a vow to always tell the truth. I am getting the distinct impression you are being less than honest with me!”

Ugh!! I was caught and I felt really silly when I said to him, “I don’t like the way you put the silverware into the dishwasher!”

There! It was out! I had told him what had been bugging me for several weeks. He could barely suppress the relief he felt. He gave me a big hug and said, “Thank goodness that’s all it is! Show me how you want me to do it!”

This was my first lesson in how withholding even little things can end up creating a big energy disconnect between those with whom we are in relationship. Victor had had the courage to make me honor my commitment to truth telling and once I did, the energy cleared.

The second incident happened a few months into our relationship. I had been invited to attend an event and I wanted Victor to go with me. He told me his truth — he really wasn't interested in going. I immediately started crying while Victor sat in silence looking at me, not knowing quite what to do. About thirty seconds into my crying exhibition I had the realization this was an old pattern I had carried over from my first marriage — a way I could manipulate my husband into doing what I wanted him to do.

As soon as this realization hit me, I immediately stopped crying, stood up and said to Victor, “No, I'm not going to do this anymore. I always cried when I didn't get my way in my first marriage, and I'm not going to try to manipulate you in that way.”

Victor was stunned. He told me later, he could not believe the courage I had demonstrated in confessing such a deep and hidden truth to him (and to myself). We both feel this incident was a major stepping stone in building a relationship of trust between us. Each time a new situation presented itself where one or both of us felt out of alignment, it became easier and easier to work through it and talk it out. We developed a level of safety and trust I have never experienced with another human being and our relationship has blossomed.

I truly feel the reason so many relationships fail is because the partners have not made a conscious and committed agreement to be truthful with one another. If we could all reach a point of feeling safe to communicate our truth to everyone with whom we are in

relationship, knowing our truth would be heard and honored, our feeling of personal empowerment would be heightened and the world would be a more peaceful place.

 **TOOL:**

(22) The Truthfulness Vow (*p. 217*)

