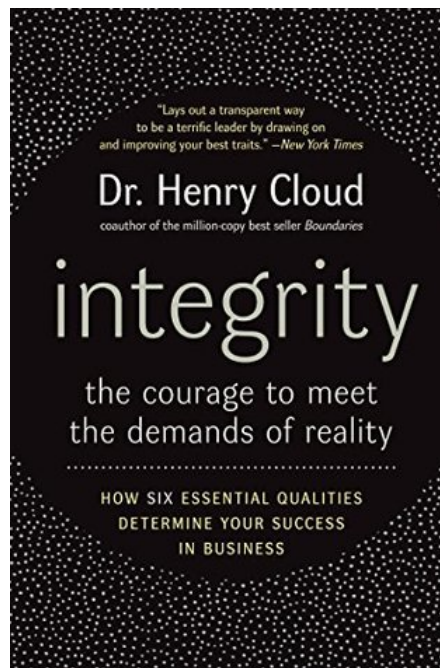




Integrity: The Courage to Face the Demands of Reality

Henry Cloud

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Integrity—more than simple honesty, it's the key to success. A person with integrity has the ability to pull everything together, to make it all happen no matter how challenging the circumstances. Drawing on experiences from his work, Dr. Henry Cloud, a clinical psychologist, leadership coach, corporate consultant and nationally syndicated radio host, shows how our character can keep us from achieving all we want to (or could) be.

In *Integrity*, Dr. Cloud explores the six qualities of character that define integrity, and how people with integrity:

Are able to connect with others and build trust
Are oriented toward reality
Finish well
Embrace the negative
Are oriented toward increase
Have an understanding of the transcendent

Integrity is not something that you either have or don't, but instead is an exciting growth path that all of us can engage in and enjoy.

Integrity: The Courage to Face the Demands of Reality Details

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Alison Ruge says

I took copious notes on this book, journaled for weeks about what came up for me. Here are some excerpts I loved from this book:

Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is when we extend favor to someone, not because they have earned it in some way but because we just possess it to give. It is a stance in life, a way of being. Leave behind a trail of people who have experienced your being “for them” even when you are getting nothing in return. p84

Integrity, the kind that meets the demands of reality, is character that can handle another person’s not being all someone needs that person to be. By moving as a positive force that is “for” the other person’ getting better, as opposed to moving against him or disengaging because he isn’t, the person leverages him to a higher level. As a result, these people do not get dragged down by other people’s failures but are a force of redemption in any situation, bringing it to a higher level. p86

People with integrated character are able to look at issues and problems regarding things other than themselves, or regarding themselves, or regarding others, in a way that the “sting” is taken out of them. They neutralize negative truth with kindness, for example. Or they are just not harsh in the delivery of it. It is about the reality, not the person. They deal with the way things are and are able to see things in a way that is not personalized about them or anyone else. When they see an issue, they deal with it without hating the person or themselves, or coming on with so much negative emotion that no resolution can be found. p126

Integrated character does not avoid negatives, it actively seeks them out to resolve them. Integrated character doesn’t see negatives as something painful but an opportunity to make things better. p180

Wes Martin says

The wisdom of this book is easily worthy of 5/5 stars, but the writing is so slow, so drawn out and so uninspiring that I had to continually stop and re-read sections just to fully glean the wisdom of the words. I would love to be able to recommend this book to someone, particularly a young ambitious go-getter, because everyone needs to hear the message that building something real in an ethical manner is brutally difficult and slow, but it's just too boring.

I'm not sure that I've ever done this before, but ...

Content: 5/5

Writing: 2/5

Lydia says

Excellent book. It is far more than the title suggests. I assumed it would be a summary on the importance of honesty. Instead it discusses the basic character traits needed in order to meet the demands of reality and

what it takes to be a well-rounded human being.

I read this with a group and one of the common issues that participants had with it is that Dr. Cloud can be fairly repetitive at times. He'll share multiple stories to illustrate the same point which can be redundant.

But overall I'd had to say that this is one of my top favorites books and I recommend it to anyone.

Travis says

I really enjoyed this book. Integrity is the spark that makes a good leader be a great leader. I like the case studies and examples that he shares so that I can really relate and understand. As integrity sometimes seems to be a difficult thing to know exactly what to do. I am not black and white and sometimes I see a lot of gray areas and that hurts integrity. This is a great book to help you understand more about being a person who wants to do the right thing and look out for others before yourself. I might put this on an annual read list to just keep myself in check.

Afua says

Let me begin with what I didn't enjoy about this book: the overly simplistic and sometimes condescending writing style. It is my belief that if an author feels you need to explain a metaphor, idiom, or word, after using it, he should not use it at all; the reader is intelligent enough to look up the phrase should she for some reason not know what it means. Also, this is a book about business. Not about romantic relationships or Christianity. I enjoy both romantic relations and Christianity, but the examples seemed to have been thrown in to meet a minimum page count. If these illustrations had been flushed out further, and related to one another, I would have found them a lot less annoying.

That said, this book had some great concepts I have already begun applying in my professional life. In fact, I have a couple pages worth of quotes from the book, just to remind myself how I can apply the lessons presented in the book on a regular basis. Integrity, as defined by Cloud, encompasses much more than being a nice person and not lying: it's the way you affect people after you left, it's how willing you are to continually improve yourself by whatever means necessary, it's how you confront people who are helping and hurting your organization.

In conclusion, despite the somewhat annoying writing style, this book is worth a read. If you don't feel like you can fit it into your schedule, I'll leave you with a quote from the book: "Therefore, [high performers] do not wait until they have the time. They make the time, first."

Chris says

This is definitely not your typical book on integrity - or at least what you think the meaning of the word integrity means. I was expecting another book espousing the usual self-help advice on how to be a more honest, moral, and upright person especially when no-one else is watching...you know, that how you act in public should be the same way you act in private. I'm sure we've all heard this before and strive to be men and women of integrity - based on this definition. But Cloud raises the stakes and puts an entirely different twist on the meaning of integrity and explains how

a person's integrity and character are intertwined, with his ultimate definition of integrity being, "having the character to meet the demands of reality."

So, using a methodical approach to explain WHY integrity and character matters and is the essence behind successful people in both business and life in general, he uses many stories from his experiences as a psychologist and executive coach to help explain and draw the reader into the narrative.

At first I was going to give this book a review of 4 stars due to what I felt was some "droning on" at times. But I then thought about it and realized that it's been a long time since a book like this has so completely altered my thinking about a topic or issue and changed my perspective so thoroughly. Because of this, 5 stars is a useful rating...prepare to be challenged and to think about your own character and integrity, and if you are truly meeting the demands of your own reality and life story.

Kamil says

Nothing groundbreaking but coherently presented piece of the importance of integrity and how one can work towards self improvement. Not preachy, which is often the off-putting aspect of those kind of books, but addressed with polite understanding of humans faults.

Claud talks about his experience with working with high achievers and explains that even they have the disintegrated aspect of self. Nobody's perfect. The key thing is to have a good connection with reality and be aware of ones faults to work on them. That need of improvement, growth is the aspect that separates the successful ones from the other. Another important point that made me convinced I'm dealing with a smart and competent person (I'm talking about Claud) is the time he spends talking about the importance of balance between work and private life and rest/regeneration. Good book, I recommend it.

Brandi D'angelo says

This book would make a great gift to a college graduate or anyone in a management/leadership position at work or even a mom or dad. It teaches how to be successful thru the tool of integrity. The author keeps your attention by including many interesting, real-life stories, such as when Tylenol pulled all of their bottles from the shelves in 1982 so that no one else would risk death after a few bottles were found to contain cyanide. It's a little bit of a long read, but well worth it.

Beth says

This books includes information about character, character in business. Basically business relationships are no different that any other relationship. The ability to stand outside of oneself and see strengths and weaknesses is essential to growth and a healthy being whether as an individual or as a business. Most of us, contain a tragic flaw that can bring us down in life. Leaders often live out a flaw which can bring down their whole life as well as their business.

Mike Mann says

I'd like to give this 3.5 stars. I read/listened to this book because I had enjoyed Dr. Cloud's previous book,

9 Things You Simply Must Do to Succeed in Love and Life. This is a worthy follow-up, and in some ways an expansion or superset. However, it didn't strike me as powerfully overall as _9 Things_. It could be I've grown as a result of reading _9 Things_, and this is consequently less impactful. Still, the author's reading was engaging and the anecdotes were entertaining and on point. And there were moments of great insight and inspiration, particularly near the end. 3.5 stars for not a must-read, but time well spent.

Eric says

"Character - the ability to meet the demands of reality."

I read Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality by Henry Cloud. Book #50 of 182, 304 pages, finished 4/14/2017.

Integrity is your standard pop psychology/business book - introducing and re-defining a common term in a way that makes it accessible and helpful for business leaders.

The heart of this book is about redefinition and expansion - mostly around the words 'integrity' and 'character'. Particularly in the case of integrity, Cloud argues that the word has been watered down to just mean that a person doesn't lie, cheat, or steal.

Cloud's point is that integrity means that the disparate elements of a person's character are integrated, and that there aren't gaping holes that will shipwreck the person in their professional or personal life.

A person of true integrity, in his estimation, has the following 6 character traits, working in concert. As I go through each of these, I'm going to do a brief self-assessment of how I think I stack up at this moment:

1. Establishing Trust - Having the emotional intelligence to connect with the feelings behind the actual facts and figures of questions, fears, and concerns.

I have no idea where I rank here. I think I am incredibly capable of it, but often self-sabotage myself. I give myself a 2.5/5.

2. Oriented Toward Truth - This one gets me in trouble and at the same time makes me valuable at the same time. The idea here is - who is the person on your team that will bring up the elephant in the room and confront the boss / client / spouse with what's **really** going on.

I think this one (and one to come) define who I am and how I think. 4/5.

3. Getting Results - Beyond knowing the technical aspects of a line of work, some people are able to focus down and get results, and some people aren't. The core is knowing who you are, what you're good at, and what you aren't.

I've been growing in this deeply over the past few years - my personality trends toward "I CAN DO ALL THE THINGS!", but it's just not true. In the last 6 months, I've refined so many of the things I do, and delegated/automated/documented them away from me, for the better of everyone around me. 3.5/5.

4. Embracing the Negative - The only value any business has is its ability to solve problems. That means directly confronting problems and finding a way through.

I'm an emotionally driven dude. This one is hard for me - setbacks are a blow to my mindset, hopefulness, and cool. I get through it, but it takes longer than I'd like. Interestingly, I think meditation is improving this in my life. 2/5.

5. Oriented Toward Increase - Some people are wired and driven to continually grow, learn, and improve. Some are sitting on a long-term plateau.

This is my FAVORITE. Of all of the changes in my life in the last 2 years, this one is something I can rally around and own. The habits, the diet changes, and the 182 books are all this trait. 5/5.

6. Oriented Toward Transcendence - Do I see myself a small part in a much bigger cause - be that religious or otherwise? Cloud is certainly a Christian, but his definition here is wide open to any cause that is larger than one person.

I struggle here. Not because I don't want to be oriented toward some form of life-long cause that goes far beyond myself, but it's more that I haven't found that cause yet. 2/5.

Finally - would I recommend this book? I dunno. Books in this vein overlap each other to a tremendous degree. I can only read so many pages of 'emotional intelligence is important for work' and 'you probably should have some defined values.'

If you aren't already inundated with this type of thought, this book would likely be a breath of fresh air for you.

Cj says

Great book with valuable lessons. This is definitely a keeper.

spoilers below

Some highlights of the book that I found to be valuable:

"Character = the ability to meet the demands of reality" (24).

This involves the ability to:

1. connect authentically;
2. be oriented toward truth;
3. get results;
4. embrace problems and failures and resolve them;
5. be oriented toward growth;
6. be transcendent.

(35)

In more depth, a person of character (is)...

1. Establishes trust

"True listening and understanding occurs when the other person understands that you understand" (60).

"To trust means to be careless" (77).

- This was a powerful one for me.

Build trust through vulnerability; allow yourself to be transparent enough to express need.

2. Oriented toward truth

"Reality is always your friend" (106).

"If we are afraid of the truth about ourselves and have a character "stance" to hide, then we are headed in the wrong direction, away from reality" (119).

3. Gets results

Know who you are: "People who do best in life have a well-defined identity on a number of fronts" 144).

- This involves discovering your strengths and performing well in them, but you have to be humble enough to also know when to "get out of the kitchen" in other areas.

Know when and how to "lose" well.

4. Embraces the negative

"Profit comes as a result of facing problems, so doing it is seen as a good thing, not a negative thing" (175).

- Be able to recover quickly.

"Outcomes are separate from the person, and the people who perform have a stable sense of self no matter what happens" (183).

Own up to mistakes: "Leaders take ownership of the results and do not try to excuse those or blame someone else... "Blame is the parking brake for improvement" (186-187).

- At the same time, confront others productively; Confront by making it "you and I versus the problem" (193).

"Honesty without love is not integrity" (192).

5. Oriented towards growth

- Develop the drive to grow via integration.

"What is put to use, grows" (210).

Take risks, but know that:

"Risk means that you do something that has the possibility of a bad outcome, and that you embrace that possibility and are OK with it" (217).

- Growth requires energy and a framework.

Some traits of people whose orientation is toward growth:

- Submits to someone further down the road

- Values the present but doesn't want to stay there

- Subjects themselves to their inability

- Rests and recovers

- Helps others develop more

6. Oriented towards transcendence

"To live and flourish, we must bow to the things larger than us" (240).

- Define your personal values.

"The immature character asks life to meet his demands. But the mature character meets the demands of life" (258).

Alyse says

Honestly this book just wasn't that great. The ideas were interesting, but they're all concepts I've found better explained in other books. Additionally, the use of comparing business issues or lack of motivation to mental illness (such as how the effects of anorexia on the body is similar to stunted growth if you're 'anorexic' in approaching knowledge, or how alcoholics/addicts sometimes need the motivation of letting down their families, or have their families push them in their own absence of motivation is like surrounding yourself with people who will help you row in business) was really weird and unnecessary. The whole thing left a bad taste in my mouth and frankly it made me not want to finish the book.

Neesha says

12/6/10 Ugh, who knows if I'll finish this...it started it as a seemingly realistic self-help book and now seems more like self-righteous...

12/26/10 I stand by the above, and that's why I just can't give this book a higher rating. Truly, there were parts of it that made great sense and that I will remember when I am "working on my character." There, I hate using even the slightest bit of psychobabble, see? I have things I want to improve on in life but I don't need to read them written 65 different ways to get it. This book was horribly repetitive. In fact, the conclusion was the best part and summarized for me what is really important and what the obstacles are to developing integrity. I also was glad the author recognized both the unchangeable factor of genes (or personality as I was thinking of it) and the need to have a safe environment in which to become a better person. Smack in the middle of a medical residency, sleep-derived and perpetually irritable, was not the place for a natural hothead like me to "have the courage to meet the demands of reality." So he recognized that those things can stop you, which I liked...too bad it took him the whole book to get to it.

Jeff Bobin says

This has been added to my list of must reads!

I find the integrity of so many people and organizations being questioned today that I found this book one of the most valuable I have read in a long time. The subtitle is the key to what makes this book so important in the culture we live in today. "the courage to meet the demands of reality" is a real challenge for many today.

Think about the many ways we use the word integrity when we are talking not just about people but about organizations, buildings and even data, and you begin to see why reality is such an important part of our life.

Using four dimensions of establishing trust, being oriented toward truth, getting results and embracing the negative you are challenged to rethink the way you live and lead others. The discussion on how to build trust might just be the most important part for many today as he deals with moving from building connections to vulnerability.

The last section of the book about the importance of realizing that the key is to see ourselves as a small portion of something much bigger than ourselves will help you see how it all fits together not only for yourself but for the organizations you lead.

This will be on my must read list!
