Sincerity, Entry 1 of 1

We listen to one another with an open mind and an open heart, and we share our experience with the understanding that it won’t necessarily be shared by everyone else.

—Living Clean, Chapter 3, “A Spiritual Journey”

Among the first things many of us notice about NA is how recovering addicts get very real with each other when sharing in meetings. Especially among using addicts, sincerity is sometimes viewed as weakness. Showing up to recovery meetings for the first time and seeing people willingly exposing vulnerabilities the way we do can be both shocking and refreshing. Listening openly opens us up.

We changed our minds a lot before getting clean. Most of us adapted to whatever was happening around us, as a survival technique or just to get ourselves through any old situation. Yeah, yeah, yeah, we played along, not making any waves. In recovery, we may find ourselves listening to others and just trying to match how they share. We share like other addicts because we don’t want to call attention to ourselves. Or we use pretense and pretend to be something we’re not. One addict wrote, “I would tailor my shares to try to appeal to the listeners, and the harder I tried to make people relate, the phonier I felt (and sounded). When I just tell my own story my own way, people seem to connect so much more.”

Something shifts as we do the work of staying clean. Honesty is prioritized over ease. True connection over surface. Sincerity over fitting in. When we share, we allow ourselves and each other the dignity of our own understanding and experience. We each take on the responsibility of expressing what’s going on with us. It’s harder to talk the talk when we don’t walk the walk. We share what we’ve found, what we think, and where our uncertainties lie. The truer we are in what we share with others, the better the odds that they will be able to relate.

As a recovering addict, sincerity makes it possible for me to connect with others in a real way. I will keep it real today.