

Community Comment
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The Value of Truth

The truth was a family value in my family. In my twenties, I had a conversation with my Mother about why it was so important to my parents that my brother and I always had to tell the truth. She told me the reasons I would have expected to hear. The idea that your word is your bond, that trust is critical to work performance and friendships, and that it is important that you say what you know to be the facts about the many and varied life experiences we will have in our life time. She pointed out how difficult it is to remember a lie that you didn't really experience and how easy to remember the truth because you lived it. We agreed that trust is critical to any important relationship you may have and the foundation of trust is that you are known to tell the truth.

As a young adult, this conversation and others marked a change in our relationship. We were adding friend to the role of parent. She surprised me, however, when she told me that as a first generation American, trust was a component of fitting in to the American culture. As an Italian American, she experienced the bias of being different. She learned early on, she said, that acceptance came more quickly as she became known as a person that could be trusted. You earn trust when you tell the truth. That experience was a part of her first generation experience I hadn't heard before. She said that was especially the case of her mother and father that were both immigrants.

Over the years, I personally have learned that truth and reality are not always the same. They should be, and by and large they can be, but we were born with a brain and a brain can perceive things that another brain may perceive differently. Truth may not be factual, but facts are always the truth. You can have your own truth but you cannot have your own facts.

Even this gets dicey, though, because facts change over time. What I mean to say is that as we learn more about the world around us, facts change. Once we thought the earth was flat. It was true. This changed as we learned more and more about the world that we live in. A witness to a crime or accident may believe they know the truth about what happened, but they only had their point of view. The facts collected add to their truth to create what really happened.

Truth and accuracy is fundamental to the well being of a community. With trust, we can get things done that we desire that benefit the community. Without trust, we are on our own. The founders of this great country of ours actually wrote this in to our government. The saying that we use to express this in everyday life is; we are a country of laws, not men. In court, we gather the evidence to come to the truth. That doesn't make it perfect, but it helps us be as accurate as we can be.

The value of truth and accuracy are under attack. So is the rule of law. The shocking part of this attack is where it's coming from. This attack is coming from the current resident of the White House; the President of the United States. Just this last weekend, our ambassador to the United Nations said new sanctions against Russia would be announced on Monday. Instead, she was charged with being confused. She replied she was not confused.

Trust, based on truth, is a value we cannot afford to lose. That will destroy this country.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.