



“Be true to your work, your word, and your friend.”
– Henry David Thoreau

**WatchGlass
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By isolating a single aspect of a broader situation and focusing on it, great progress can be made...

Being True to Your Word

by Rosanne Scriffignano, Ph.D.

We recently made plans to meet a friend at a local restaurant. When we arrived, she was not there. Forty-five minutes later, she dashed through the door explaining her tardiness: She had wanted to clean up her kitchen before she met us. As we parted company that evening, I thought about what her actions had communicated. Perhaps she thought we wouldn't mind her tardiness because we are close friends. Honestly, I don't know what she thought; however, this experience reminded me of the importance of being true to your word.

Sadly, we all know people who are not true to their word. These well-meaning folks over-promise and under-deliver. The impact of their actions depends on the situation, as well as the relationship of the people involved. For example, although I was initially annoyed by my friend's lack of sensitivity and courtesy, I decided that it wasn't worth losing our friendship over the incident. However, if this interaction had occurred with someone else, I may have reacted differently.

In our busy world of over-scheduled calendars and too many commitments, it may feel like we're justified to not follow through on promises and make people wait. The lure of cell phones and other techno-gadgets have become a feeble stand-in for what really matters: how we treat others.

Being true to your word takes some thought and planning. For example, if you know that you can't be on time for an appointment due to another commitment, don't overbook your calendar. As you go through your day, consider how your actions might impact others. Obviously, things come up and we need to remain flexible. However, problems can occur when we have poor time management skills.

Henry David Thoreau reminded us to “Be true to your work, your word, and your friend.” When we fast-forward more than 100 years, this advice still rings true. Being mindful of commitments to others not only builds lasting relationships, it also provides a guidepost for **living a life well-spent**.

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