The Importance of Integrity in Our Daily Life!
By Dion Turner RD, LD

What does integrity mean to me?

This is a core value that all registered dietitians pledge to uphold in our profession.

The Wikipedia definition is as follows:
1. Integrity is a concept of consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes. In ethics, integrity is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions. Integrity can be regarded as the opposite of hypocrisy, [1] in that it regards internal consistency as a virtue, and suggests that parties holding apparently conflicting values should account for the discrepancy or alter their beliefs.

The word "integrity" stems from the Latin adjective integer (whole, complete).[2] In this context, integrity is the inner sense of "wholeness" deriving from qualities such as honesty and consistency of character. As such, one may judge that others "have integrity" to the extent that they act according to the values, beliefs and principles they claim to hold.

So how does integrity manifest into our everyday practice of nutrition? The following AND values and principles define guidelines for us to follow in our daily lives and while practicing the profession.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Values
Customer Focus: Meets the needs and exceeds Expectations of internal and external customers

Integrity: Acts ethically with accountability for life-long Learning and commitment to excellence

Innovation: Embraces change with creativity and strategic Thinking

Social Responsibility: Makes decisions with consideration For inclusivity as well as environmental, economic, and Social implications

According to Canadian author and business speaker Jim Clemmer, honesty and integrity build a foundation of trust. He says that "Honesty and integrity are key ingredients in developing trust. Trust is a key element in establishing credibility. Our credibility is at the center of our ability to influence others and provide strong leadership. These characteristics are the hallmarks of strong leaders."

So what does integrity mean to the nutrition professional?
The Academy's values states that lifelong learning is part of integrity. It is our responsibility to be leaders in the community to discuss issues that go beyond "clinical nutrition". Such issues are complex and involve more than just nutrition. These issues engender the very core of the definition of integrity. The Latin meaning of the word is "wholeness". To me this refers to the whole or complete impact that food has on the world; politically, globally, economically, environmentally, nutritionally, psychologically, etc.

These are areas that are not necessarily taught in classes for our profession, but are pertinent to improve food and environmental quality along with human health. Aren't these issues also tied directly to the obesity epidemic, the cost of food, availability, health and disease prevention?

For a start we can check out what other institutions are doing with these topics. To Quote Harvard Medical School Center for Health and the Global Environment, "The Center recognizes that food is not only the most basic determinant of human health, but the most personal and direct way that people interact with the environment on a
daily basis. Food issues also cut across many global environmental issues such as climate change, ozone depletion, toxics, the over-exploitation of resources, and the loss of habitat and biodiversity."

http://chge.med.harvard.edu/programs/food/index.html

As food and nutrition professionals we have to consider the science that is currently available along with the sponsor for the research. Having integrity means doing your homework to investigate these areas and forming your own opinion based on this knowledge. It also means discussing issues with peers, educators, the consumers and your community leaders.

Is integrity taught in books? Can we pick and choose when we have integrity?
What we do every day defines us as a person and a profession. Integrity engenders how we treat others, the environment, the person who grows our food, the food that we eat and so much more. As a dietetic professional we are trained to encompass the whole person while instituting MNT. We are good at problem solving and getting to the root of things.

To sum it up it is our obligation to encompass and practice the ADA ethical standards at all times. We have plenty of leaders in our profession that I look up to and respect greatly who are walking examples of practicing integrity. For most of us this important value encompasses our life without a second thought. This year I am going to focus more on this value and work hard to take steps to get involved with issues pertaining to food in my community.