

## Mike and the Kitchen Fire (Part One)

A few years ago, my roommate Mike had a few beers and decided to make tacos. He poured a half-inch of oil into a frying pan, turned the gas burner to high, and started cooking a tortilla. Soon, a small flame hovered *above* the pan—like a tiny campfire floating in midair. I asked, “Mike, are you okay?” He looked at the flame, beer in one hand, spatula in the other, and said, “*Yeah, I’m fine. I just have a little fire over here.*” Moments later, that “*little fire*” exploded upward, ignited the exhaust fan, and caught the cabinets on fire. The lights went out. The kitchen filled with smoke. And there stood Mike—still holding the spatula—murmuring, “*I can still save the tacos.*”

This story fits into this talk because it’s about us. Most of us don’t stand in front of literal flames, but we do stand in the middle of emotional ones—stress, fear, grief, exhaustion—and say the same thing Mike did: “*I’m fine.*”

## Why We Say “*I’m Fine*”

We don’t say it because we’re dishonest people. We say it because we’re human.

- **Because of societal conditioning-**

We’re taught to be strong, capable, and self-sufficient. “Don’t complain.” “Handle it.” “Keep it together.” Looking okay becomes more important than *being* okay.

- **We are afraid of being judged-**

We’re afraid of being seen as weak, needy, or broken. We worry that if people see the mess, they’ll pull away.

- **Pretending causes exhaustion-**

Pretending takes energy. Monitoring our words, our expressions, our emotions—it’s tiring. Eventually, we don’t even know what we feel anymore.

- **It is easier to be disconnected-**

When we hide from others, we also hide from ourselves. We numb out. Distract ourselves. Stay busy. And slowly, we lose touch with our own inner truth.

**Reflection:** Where in your life are you saying “*I’m fine*” when you’re anything but?

**The Powerful Truth:** “*Healing begins the moment we stop pretending we’re fine.*”

Here’s why this is true:

- **Honesty Creates Safety in the Nervous System**

Your body knows when you’re pretending.

When you tell the truth—even quietly to yourself, your nervous system can finally exhale. *Your body can’t relax when you’re lying to it.*

- **Naming Feelings Loosens Their Grip**

When you say, “I’m scared” or “I’m struggling,” the feeling stops being *everything* you are. It becomes something you’re experiencing—not your identity.

- **Vulnerability Opens the Door to Compassion**

When we’re honest, others feel permission to be honest too. Connection replaces isolation.

As Brené Brown teaches: *Vulnerability is not weakness; it is the most exact measure of courage.*

- **Truth Reconnects Us with Inner Wisdom**

When we stop performing, we can finally hear our intuition again.

Honesty brings us home to ourselves.

## **Honesty Is Not Oversharing**

Honesty does not mean telling everyone everything. It means acknowledging the truth *within yourself first*. From that grounded place, you choose **when, how, and with whom** to share.

## **Five Practical Steps to Cultivating the Courage to Be Honest**

### **1. Start with Yourself**

Ask: “*What am I actually feeling right now?*” Name it without judgment.

### **2. Find Safe Spaces**

Share with people who can listen without fixing or minimizing.

### **3. Use Simple Language**

“*I’m struggling.*” “*I’m scared.*” “*I need help.*” “*I don’t know.*”

### **4. Practice Self-Compassion**

Speak to yourself as you would to someone you love. It’s okay to not be okay.

### **5. Set Boundaries**

Say what you can and cannot give. Boundaries aren’t walls; they’re bridges to real connection.

## **What Opens When We Tell the Truth**

- Deeper connection
- Greater self-acceptance
- Clearer inner guidance
- Freedom from pretending

**Affirmation:** “*I give myself permission to be honest. I trust that my truth is worthy of being spoken and heard.*”

## **Call to Action**

This week, practice honesty with **one truth** you’ve been avoiding. Write it. Say it aloud. Or share it with someone safe. You don’t have to fix it. Just let it be true.

## **Mike and the Kitchen Fire (Part Two)**

While the cabinets were in flames, I ran to the garage, grabbed baking soda, and put out the flames. The fire stopped. The smoke cleared. When I asked Mike again, “*Are you okay?*” This time, he put down the spatula, sat on the floor, and said, “*No. I’m not okay.*” And that honesty changed everything. Mike sought help for his drinking problem, and I got a non-drinking roommate.

Friends, maybe we’re all standing in front of burning cabinets, saying we’re fine—when what we really need to do sit down, put the spatula away, and tell the truth.

## **Conclusion**

You deserve the healing that comes from honesty. You deserve the freedom of living one life instead of two. You are not weak for telling the truth; you are courageous.

## **Blessing**

May you leave this place a little lighter than you arrived.

May you feel no pressure to be perfect, fixed, or “fine.”

May you have the courage to tell the truth—to yourself first, and then with kindness.

May honesty soften your heart rather than harden it.

And when life asks more of you than you can give,

may you remember: you are allowed to be human,

and you are worthy of love exactly as you are.

And so, it is.