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Using “I spoke my truth”

There it is again... that saying we hear out of the mouths of our neighbors and friends. Plastered all over talk shows, self-help books, and life coach blogs. The problem is that many folks succumb to the pitfalls of using this saying to justify hurting others or speaking without thinking. The intention of this saying is to encourage others to be genuine in their communication and advocate for themselves. So how do we use this statement in its true form?

- Understand that this statement is about expressing what you know to be true about how you feel, what you need, or your perceptions **absent** of manipulation, hurtful purposes, or compromising to match the truth of others.
- **T.H.I.N.K.** Before you speak. Is it **T**houghtful, **H**elpful, **I**nsightful, **N**ecessary and **K**ind?
- Be aware of the purpose. Is the purpose to let someone know how you feel with the focus on resolving the issue? Will this information help the other party understand, in a kind manner, something they can change to enhance their relationships or themselves? Are you looking to set a boundary or get a healthy need met? Is your perception of an event different from another and stating so will help you or the other person?
- If you are unsure of the purpose or if it doesn't meet the criteria of T.H.I.N.K, spend some more time thinking on it and come back to it later.
- Respond, don't react.
- Do not use this statement to justify your behavior when it impacts others negatively for no purpose. Just because you believe it to be true, doesn't mean it is okay to say it.
- Know everyone's "truth" is not the same, and, if another's truth is not congruent with yours, it doesn't mean they are lying or wrong. Speaking your truth is just that, speaking it. It is not a matter of convincing someone that it should be their truth.

It is all too often that individuals will say something like “at least I spoke my truth” or “I had to speak my truth” to minimize the negative impact they had on others. It has been used to deflect accountability for actions which were abusive in nature, hurtful, or out of anger. It can easily become a statement of self-righteousness. This twist in meaning takes away from the positive message which comes from “Speak your truth”. Careful use of this statement can encourage the genuine expression of others. Misuse can lead to this being another catch phrase which sounds profound but means nothing.