

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #29: Honesty

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they are able to tell the truth even when it is not easy.

67%

*of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.**

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed.

"Honesty" is one of six positive-values assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

Acknowledging Acts of Honesty

“We’re home!” your teenager and his best friend say.

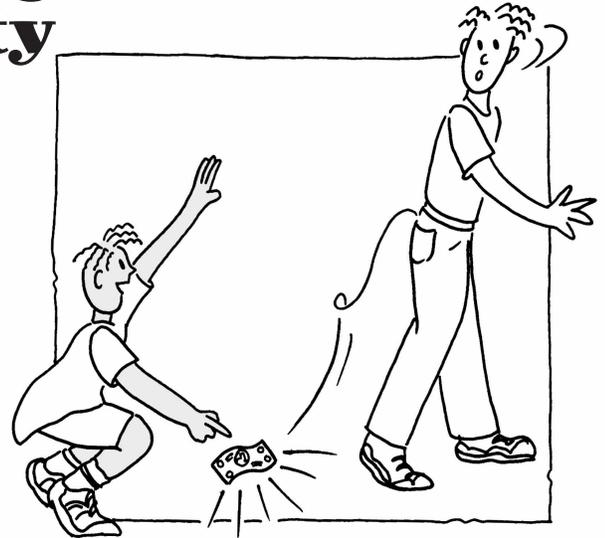
When you ask how the movie was, they both say great. When you ask what they saw, they each give you different answers.

“You know, I’d never cheat,” your daughter once told you. But you notice that she brought home a test with a perfect score and you know she didn’t study or know the material well enough.

Unfortunately, cheating and dishonesty are more prevalent in our children than we would like. In a survey of 3,370 high school students, about 9 out of 10 said that cheating is common at their school. The number one reason for cheating: It’s not a big deal.

Yet according to Search Institute, honesty is a big deal. Of youth surveyed, 67% say they believe it is important to tell the truth even when it is not easy. And there’s a difference between girls and boys: 73% of girls say they value honesty, whereas only 60% of boys do.

To instill the value of honesty, we need to



talk about it, model it, and explain why honesty is an important value. Honest people are trustworthy, sincere, and genuine people. Honesty is a value worth having.

Modeling Honesty

Tips for modeling honesty for your child:

- **Correct the situation immediately when clerks give you too much change.**
- **Be honest in talking to telemarketers. Instead of hanging up or making an excuse, just say, “No, thank you. We’re not interested.” Then hang up.**
- **Admit when you’ve fudged the truth and apologize.**
- **Brainstorm ways to be honest in a particularly sticky situation, such as breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend.**

time together

Three ways to help your child value honesty:

- 1** *Encourage each family member to make a personal commitment to tell the truth. Honestly acknowledge feelings. Honestly admit to successes and mistakes.*
- 2** *Don’t overreact when your child lies to you. Children will lie if they fear your reaction.*
- 3** *Work together to come up with family rules about honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.*

Watch What You Do... and Say

Researchers Svenn Lindskold and Pamela S. Walters found that college students said some lies were more permissible than others if they saved others from embarrassment, shame, or hurt. In fact, many people (children and adults alike) tell small lies regularly, such as saying you feel fine when you don't, making up an excuse to get rid of someone annoying, fibbing about your age or weight, and distorting the truth so that you don't hurt someone's feelings. As a parent, how do you feel about these kinds of lies? What do you teach your children about honesty and lying in these situations?

Quick Tip:
Be an example of honesty
for your children.

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- What would you do if someone asked you to be dishonest?
- Do you find it easy or hard to be honest with yourself? Why?
- Do you see dishonesty in advertising? Where?
- How can we make honesty our family policy?

When You Suspect Your Child Is Lying

Don't accuse your child. Instead, ask:
"Do you think I believe you right now?"
Or, "Do you think I might be struggling
with believing you right now?" Give
your child the opportunity to tell the
truth.

More Help for Parents

The First Honest Book about Lies by Jonni Kincher. For ages 13 and up, this book encourages readers to develop honesty as a personal value through examples, games, and thought-provoking questions. (Published by Free Spirit.)

FINAL WORD

"Where is there dignity unless there is honesty?"

—Cicero

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by Search Institute, www.search-institute.org; 800-888-7828.
Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005 by Search Institute. Major support for Search Institute's *Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth* initiative is provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.