

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly school newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Word of the Month: Honesty

Resource Highlight:



Join Lutheran Counseling Services Executive Director, Megan Miessler, LCSW as she discusses the transition to summer & how to help your kids. Thurs., May 16, 2019 @ 12 Register [HERE](#).



Car Conversations

Whether in the car, at the dinner table or store line, here are conversation ideas to build this quality in your child.

- Look for ways to highlight how honesty was used and what was the result. Consider Bible stories, bedtime stories, or even TV shows or movies that highlight this.



Instilling honesty in children is a top priority for most parents. Yet how can parents respond when children veer from honesty into lying? And how common is this?

To answer these questions, we can look at the work of Dr. Kang Lee, who has studied deception and lying for decades. Some of the findings of his research teams give us insight into what is going on with our children. Namely, he notes that children as young as 2 years of age lie, and that children's abilities to lie increase with age to about the age of 12. Unfortunately, he notes that parents are only slightly better at detecting lies in their own children than chance guessing. While this can be disheartening, it also shows that lying is a part of the developmental process, and one that equipped parents can help children to navigate.

If we can't always rely on our ability to detect a child's lie, let's look at what may be behind the lie. Why do kids lie? Children may tell "fantasy lies" that stem from their imagination such as what an imaginary friend told them. Others may tell a "white lie" (typically beginning around age 6) that benefits someone or avoids hurt feelings. They may tell a self-serving lie to be seen a certain way, avoid punishment, or to gain something. Understanding why a child is lying can help parents create an environment that promotes honesty and truth.

What we know about brain development is that consequences are not understood until the late teens, and into the early twenties.



- Read Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Discuss how this relates to your family. Why is honesty and truthfulness important in the family?

- Read together Proverbs 30:32:

If you play the fool and exalt yourself, or if you plan evil, clap your hand over your mouth!

Consider how to use this strategy to pause the moment it sounds like a child may be dishonest. Consider having your child put his/her hand over the mouth or make a time-out T sign to pause, then start again in truth. Model this yourself.

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Reach out to your school, the LCS main office at (407) 644-4692 or lcsfl.com to connect to your school's counselor for additional support & resources on this or other topics.

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This means that highlighting the negative impacts and consequences of lying may not be the most effective way to address a child's lying behavior. Research shows that promoting the positive elements of honesty is more effective in reducing lying than highlighting the negative consequences of dishonesty.

We also know that children need to clearly hear that lying is wrong. While they may know that their behavior (ex: taking a piece of candy without permission) is wrong, they may not initially know that lying about it is also wrong. Also consider the example they may see in parent's behavior, and highlight instances of truth, such as telling the child's true age, even if it means paying more.

Help the child understand the value of honesty and that it builds trust and open, supportive relationships, and may lead to more privileges as a result. Praising children for telling the truth, even if it is about their poor choices, sets the expectation of truth and its importance. Set them up to tell the truth by praising their honesty. For behaviors you know they did, start by asking questions about the behavior (ex: why did you go against our screen time policy?) rather than asking if they did it, which may set them up to lie rather than be truthful.

Consider 1 Peter 3:10 *Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.* It is God's plan for us to speak the truth. We cannot lie to God; He knows our true hearts. And He loves us unconditionally. Clearly guiding children to honesty by making honesty an easier path to follow in our homes is a great start. While the behavior may lead to consequences, it is important that children know that their parent's love for them is unconditional.

References:

Evans, A.D., & Lee, K. (2013). Emergence of lying in very young children.

