**Life Lessons**

**HOW AND WHY IT PAYS TO BE HONEST AND TELL THE TRUTH**

**QUESTIONS to ask about Honesty**: • Would I rather others admire and fear me, or know and love me? • Underneath all my highs and lows, who is the real me, my deep-down true self? Who knows me like this? • Did my parents punish lying more or less than other misbehaviors? Do I do the same? Why, or why not? • How has it made me feel when others lied to me to protect themselves, and said they did it to protect me? • Is my mind closed about my beliefs, or do I keep looking for confirmation in different sources of truth? • Have the things I most believe in stood the test of time? Has history shown it endures, because it’s real? • Most importantly, when I list ***the people and organizations I most trust*** to tell me what’s real and true, and when I look at the chart of what’s healthy and what’s sickening, ***how healthy are they?***

**IMPORTANT BELIEFS FOR BEING TRUTHFUL**: ***My selfish self*** wants me to be comfortable and happy in the short run, not caring as much about others or the future. *My false self has to lie,* to hide how selfish and small I am. It *doesn’t accept its limitations*, so it’s often ill at ease. My chameleon ego shows people who I think I am, instead of who they realize I am. Instead of admitting my mistakes to earn back others’ trust that I’m being honest, my ego tries to get others to admit *their* mistakes, hoping they’ll try to earn back *my* trust. It wastes a lot of time on things that matter only to me, and only for a short time.

***My true self*** sees and wants what’s best for everyone in the long run. The real me can be myself at all times, which shows that I see others *as* *we all are*. When I don’t fulfill a promise, instead of making excuses, *I make amends*: I say I am sorry for making the wrong promise, and then make a better one that I am able to keep. I was taught there are *many sources of truth* that will support and *confirm each other*, *so I keep examining them*. They include science, the arts, journalism, history, democratic jurisprudence (trial by jury), reason (common sense), natural law and observation, the constitution and the government authority it provides (law and order), philosophy, popular opinion, and the author of all truth, God. When I consult them carefully, I will always find a *consensus that confirms what’s lasting, real, and true*. I realize easily what matters most, and seek guidance from others who have this same wisdom.

**SEVERE COSTS of lying to myself or others**: *losing my way* often because of my bad maps of reality; *exhaustion* from defending those maps and avoiding the briefer but greater pain of seeing how much I’ve missed; *keeping up* with my lies; *longing to be trusted* (like the little boy crying wolf); finding *no one I trust* *or admire* is with me in my filter bubble; *believing my own lies*; being *defensive when criticized*; not understanding why *I can’t live up* to my own standards; feeling like a *fraud*, afraid of *being exposed*.

**BENEFITS of being honest with myself and others**: Remembering the word *trust* comes from the word *truth*, and *honesty* from *honor*, when I say that I trust you with the truth, I honor us both with my honesty. The *truth sets me free, to change my mind* in response to new evidence. Being a *lifelong learner* gives me a *life that’s interesting*, to me and others. Being honest with God and others confesses my sin, allowing me to receive enough *forgiveness* to give it freely back to others, and to myself. I don’t have to discount the *love, respect, and understanding* of other healthy people, because they know and like the real me, warts and all.

• My deceitfulness feeds my sick, dying, make-believe self, which can only feed the same in others. • My honesty feeds my real, healthy, fruitful self, and from my fullness, I feed the wellness of others.

***Truth Soul Foods Exam:***

***Reality, Authority, Validity, Power***

**Denial:** lying, breaking promises, denying one's **Honesty:** telling the truth, keeping promises,

 limitations, lacking consensual reality lifelong learning, consistency in conduct

 **Denial brings**  • Lying • Cheating • Delusions**Honesty brings** • Character • Wisdom • Curiosity • Two-facedness • Closed mind • Ignorance • Common sense • Truth-seeking • Authenticity

Which *people* do I believe about what’s true, real, lasting and powerful? What makes me believe *they know*?

 And which *organizations* do I believe are the most trustworthy and truthful? Why do I trust *them*?

Do these people and organizations ever admit their mistakes, realize the harm they’ve done, and use this pain

 to motivate themselves to change their ways? Or do they just point out the mistakes of others?

Are my truth sources trusted by my family at home, by those I work with and work for in public? What authorities do I honor with my news filters, my time and money? Which do I reject? *Why them?*

When I list ***the people and organizations I most trust*** to guide me, the ones I tell others to trust, if I look at the chart to see healthy and sickening fruits, ***how healthy are my guides? How healthy am I?***

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**Receiving Junk Foods of Denial Receiving­ Whole Foods of Honesty**

­­• I pay little attention to seeking new information🡪 • In all settings I’m seeking to learn new things

• I get new information from similar, limited sources 🡪 • I enjoy seeking different views on things I see

• My one authority for truth needs no confirmation 🡪 • I seek confirmation in various wisdom streams

• Listening for what my itching ears want to hear 🡪 • Listening for painful truths that will set me free

### • I believe I don’t need to learn or grow any more 🡪 • I seek first to understand, then to be understood

• I believe everybody lies and covers up to get ahead 🡪 • Yes many do, but I believe a few can be trusted

• I arrange my life in very separate compartments 🡪 • I align with the same values/beliefs everywhere

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**Sharing Sickening Fruits of Denial Sharing Healthy Fruits of Honesty**

• I won’t give you criticism if it hurts your feelings 🡪 • I criticize to help you and others now and later

• I believe admitting mistakes shows weakness 🡪 • I admit mistakes to repair damages to us both

• I hear only my own criticism, speak only others’🡪 • I take criticism publicly and process it privately

• My lies are validated by what they do for me 🡪 • If a lie works to fool others, it will also fool me

• I show only my best to all so I’ll be admired 🡪 • I show all to some so I’ll be known and loved

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**• My deceitfulness feeds my sick, dying, make-believe self, which can only feed the same in others. • My honesty feeds my real, healthy, fruitful self, and from my fullness, I feed the wellness of others.**

**RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN**

**WHO KNOW AND TELL THE TRUTH**

 Behind everything we’ve been taught about truth, we can find an awful lot of truth:

* *Don’t tell lies.* Moses, quoting God in the 10 Commandments, modern translation
* *Honesty is telling the truth to other people. Integrity is telling myself the truth.* Spencer Johnson
* *Every lie is two lies: the lie we tell others and the lie we tell ourselves to justify it.* Robert Brault
* *We are as sick as our secrets.*  12- step recovery
* *Honesty is the best policy.* Shakespeare

#  My dad taught me to realize that by admitting my mistakes and taking my punishment, I would get my pain over with, and minimize it. Life has taught me the same thing. That’s why parents should explain to their children that they will give light punishment for acts of selfishness, impulsivity, and poor judgment, and heavier punishment for deliberate lies to cover up those acts. It’s the same for broken promises (but we can make *better* promises, when we get better information).

*Preschool and Elementary Years*

 A good parent might say, *“You wish you hadn’t broken that. But you did. You wish you could forget you broke that. But I want you to remember, so you can learn not to do that again. You wish I would not know that you broke that, or that I wouldn’t care, but I know, and here’s why I care. . . .”*

 During these years, children need to learn from *The Boy who Cried Wolf.* Punish lies by not believing a lying child later, the next time they may be trying to avoid punishments they deserve*.* Don’t believe things if the evidence and the track records indicate otherwise. Our discipline should prepare children for how things will go for them in life: *Actions have consequences. When you abuse a privilege, you lose a privilege. That’s life.*

*Middle and High School*

 At this age, friends and peer groups sometimes create experiences that teach sickening habits and attitudes to our children, and give them a false reality, about what’s real, what works, and what’s important. They need us to correct these deceptions, and they need to learn how they can tell those things for themselves. Tell them it’s all about what will make them and other people sick or healthy.

 **Tell them where you get your truth, and why.** Three great places to learn what’s best for all concerned in the long run are:

* *spiritual truths*, found in the Bible and church traditions, which have stood the test of time,
* *physical/natural truths,* found in objective, academic/scientific research, and
* *socially determined truths*, found in laws, courts, elections, and *healthy* polls and journalism.

(These last two sources of truth would not include people who are *proven to be* paid to discover or report things that create power or money for those who hire them.)

It is also healthy to teach children to identify *more* *personal sources of truth*. These aren’t necessarily unhealthy, but they are clearly biased:

* their parents’ reality (yes, that’s you -- they know you’re biased, so it’s best to admit it. It’s also best to ask them to say where they think you aren’t being honest, and then admit your own lies), and
* their own mental and emotional reality (their feelings, memories, opinions, and beliefs, which are just as biased as yours).

Then you can explain there is *a third source for truth that is even more biased* than the healthy personal sources just described, and way more biased than the sources first mentioned above, authorities from the culture at large. The most biased set of beliefs and “facts” are from subcultures with vested interests. They don’t even value the five previous sources of truth mentioned above.

As a parent, you will be tempted to explain what you feel those biased subcultures are. But it works better to ask adolescent and young adult children to research this for themselves. Ask them to tell you what they have found out about where their “authorities” are getting their truth. This can be really interesting. If they don’t come back and tell you what their research has found, they are demonstrating they’re just believing what makes them feel good about themselves, the way preschoolers do.

 Finally, you will be more credible to your child if you seriously ask yourselves as parents these questions:

* *Do we keep our promises, and make only promises that need to be kept?*
* *Do we lie to avoid facing the truth about ourselves? Do we admit it when we do?*
* *Do we learn from painful truths that set us free from our illusions and bad habits?*
* *Do we show submission to authority for truth, power, reality, and validity that’s higher than ours?*
* *Do we check the facts about what’s going on in the world by consensus of different sources?*
* *Who do we trust to know what’s most important, what will last? Why do we trust them?*
* *Do we spend too much time with realities that are virtual, instead of virtuous and real?*
* *What groups, leaders, or celebrities are we most loyal to? Do we know what they’re loyal to?*
* *Do we lecture our children, or do we* ***ask them all these questions, to draw the truth out of them****?*

When you explain what you learned from asking yourselves these questions, you have earned the right to be believed. If your child doesn’t answer the questions, and doesn’t believe you either, explain that *until they do, they are forfeiting their seat at the table* where their privileges and discipline are decided. That seat has to be earned by adult behavior. Until then, you will set the consequences for their actions without their input.

**RESPONDING to the TRUTH**

 **Denial vs. Honesty**

 ***BLESSINGS THAT COME TO THE HONEST PERSON***

Those with a pure heart who aren’t deceitful will walk closer with God **Psalms 24: 3-5** Lies are soon exposed, but truthful words stand the test of time **Prov. 12:19**  Know the truth about yourself and the world, and God will set you free **John 8: 31-32** If we don’t deceive ourselves, and if we tell the truth about our faults, we receive *not only* *forgiveness, but cleansing, healing transformation.* **I John 1: 8-9**

***THE HIGH COST OF DECEITFULNESS***

Unless you seek to see the world regularly as God and others do, your vision will be blurred, and this will hinder your efforts to help others, God, or yourself. **Matt 7: 3-5**

Today, lying would be likened to a cancer, or more likely, to a pandemic. In the Bible, the most frequent images of lying are of spreading fire, and an arrow shot to kill. The following points are taken mostly from **Proverbs 26: 18-28, Jeremiah 9: 3-9, and James 3: 2-8:**

Beware spreading false rumors, accusations, or gossip throughout the land. **Exodus 23: 1** People can delight in lies, becoming two-faced, smiling through their teeth. **Psalm 62: 4**  Lies come back to haunt us: people won’t trust us anymore, and will lie back to us. Eventually we begin to believe our own lies. We fool others, and their reactions fool us into gradually believing that my false front is the real me. **II Timothy 3:13** Deceitfully smooth talkers will not live out half their days. **Ps 55: 21, 23** We lose touch with our need for God: *Through deceit they refuse to know me.* **Jer 9: 6** God will return the favor, and say that He does not know us. **Matt 7: 21-23** When we keep doing what we know is wrong, God gives us over to it. **Rom 1: 25-28**

**SATAN** is closely linked with lying: Jesus called him the Deceiver **Matt** **27:63, John 8:33**

**FLATTERY** is just another form of deceit. It’s listed with wickedness. When we flatter and when we find fault, we’re deceiving people to make ourselves feel better. **Ps 12: 2,3 Jude 16**

**RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY** can be an excuse to avoid church. It ticked off Jesus, who went off about clean-looking cups and whitewashed tombs. **Matt 23: 25-28**

 Because so many today get all their *news filtered* for them by biased and often dishonest sources in social and traditional media, perhaps this prophesy is coming true in America now: “*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth, and turn aside to myths.”* **2 Tim 4: 3-4, NIV**