

5 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR KIDS TO TELL THE TRUTH

Posted by Carey Nieuwhof | Blog, Fight For The Heart, Imagine The End, Make It Personal |



My grandmother used to tell me about a parenting strategy she used to us to get my mom and uncles to tell the truth when they were kids.

If she suspected one of her children was lying, she would line them up and tell them that she was going to inspect their foreheads. Every time one of the kids asked why, she simply said, "Because when I see your forehead, I can tell who's telling the truth or not."

Inevitably, as she went down the line, the child who was lying would cover their forehead so my grandma couldn't see. Then my grandmother would proceed to them and say "So it was you. Now I know."

Clearly, she was a genius.

I suppose using a game of deception to encourage honesty might not be the best parenting idea going, but you have to give her points for ingenuity.

What my grandmother struggled with is what every parent struggles with: how do I get my kids to be honest?

I suppose some of you have some parenting tricks you'd love to share (we're all ears here), but here are a few strategies that can help you foster the kind of atmosphere that values truth:

1. Start talking about honesty early. If you begin the conversation early, you can establish honesty as a core value in your home. You can reward a toddler's behavior every time they tell you they did something bad. Well that wasn't right and we'll have to do something about it, but I'm SO glad you told me the truth. Thank you! That's so important!

2. Discourage dishonesty even more than you discourage the crime. We all make mistakes. But we don't have to lie about them. If your child does something wrong, consequences are in order. But if they lie about what they did, make the consequences greater. If all you do is punish the act, you might be giving them unspoken incentive to lie about the act.

3. Don't lie. I was going to say this more tactfully, but maybe we need to be direct. Almost all of us tell white lies from time to time. Ever been caught in front of your kids trying to come up with an excuse to get out of something? Oh, just tell them you're busy, I know you really don't want to go. Or maybe your kids have overheard you talking about how to get that 'extra' day off on your vacation. Well, you could call in sick. Ouch. They model what you do more than they model what you say.

4. Search for a way to tell the truth. While this might not work well with two-year-old, but as your kids get older, explain the dilemma you find yourself in when you are tempted to tell a 'white lie'. For example, you might say, "I really want to tell her I liked the broccoli salad, but I didn't. So I found the things I did like and told her about that. . . such as, "I so appreciate all the time and effort you put into making the meal. Thank you!" It teaches your kids to search for a way to tell the truth when we all have trouble finding it. And it teaches them to value honesty in every situation.

5. Talk about your struggles. As your kids get older, talk about your struggles to tell the truth. Tell them about how easy it is to lie in order to not hurt someone's feelings, and how you really have to wrestle with being 100% honest at work in every situation. When you let them know it's still a struggle for you, it validates the struggle they feel within themselves. It's also another way to establish the value of honesty as a core value not just in your home, but in your lives.

What are you learning about valuing honesty in your home? What would you add to the discussion?