

Pointers For Parents

Encouraging Honesty Through Humor

(NAPSA)—A lie is no laughing matter; a child who lies frequently is not funny and teaching kids about the importance of honesty is definitely no joke. Yet humor may be one of the best ways to help kids address the subject.

“Today” show contributing psychologist Ruth Peters notes, “At some time during the growing years, many kids will tell stories that range from fudging to outright fibs. In fact, a year-long study of 8,600 high school students found that 71 percent admitted cheating on at least one exam and 92 percent had lied to their parents.”

“These behaviors do not begin in adolescence. Children as young as three will take shortcuts in completing tasks or engage in a lie or two. Is this deceitful or normal? Yes on both counts,” concludes Dr. Peters, whose newest book is *Laying Down the Law: The 25 Laws of Parenting to Keep Your Kids on Track, Out of Trouble, and (Pretty Much) Under Control*.

While lying becomes serious if children do it regularly (or use it to avoid stressful emotions), parents need to know how to deal with a child who lies.

Dr. Peters recommends parents explain to children why lying is wrong and impose appropriate consequences when it occurs. It’s equally important to be a positive role model, to de-emphasize an “ends justify the means” philosophy and to praise efforts over results.

Humor can help get the dialogue going while also reducing the preachiness that can cause kids to turn a deaf ear.

Humor is easily found in all media—books, television, theater, movies. Films often deal with character flaws in a way that makes audiences laugh, not only at the characters on the screen, but at the recognition of those less-than-desirable traits they recognize in themselves.



Bringing home an amusing movie may help parents bring home the serious point that honesty is the best policy.

“My kids and I laughed out loud...together,” says Yvonne Vasquez, who recently watched the DVD of a movie called *Big Fat Liar* at home in Los Angeles with her three kids, ages 4 to 15. *Big Fat Liar* is an “on-target” comedy about two kids on a quest to get even with a sleazy Hollywood producer after he steals one of their class papers to turn it into a big motion picture. The film’s characters learn firsthand the importance of ethics and trustworthiness in a most entertaining way.

“They really *got it*,” says Mrs. Vasquez, “and I think they strongly identified with the young characters.” The movie features popular teen stars Frankie Muniz of “Malcolm in the Middle” and Amanda Bynes of “The Amanda Show” and “What I Like About You.”

“It somehow helped us make connections to our own lives,” says Mrs. Vasquez.

It’s like Muniz’s character says, “the truth is not overrated.”