

HONESTLY!

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Honesty is one of man's most admired qualities and one of the core ingredients for a successful life. Yet from the beginning of time, dishonesty has caused the downfall of individuals, organizations, kings, presidents and empires. Why is dishonesty so appealing? The word honesty means to be honorable in principles, intentions and actions. It means to be sincere and frank, truthful and creditable, upright, fair, just and to have a good reputation. That doesn't sound too hard - or does it? Where do we go wrong?

Kids learn from a very early age that "fessing up" causes pain so they decide not to tell - even though they know the punishment may be lessened because of their honesty. Since they don't want to experience any consequences at all, they hide their wrongdoing and hope it all goes away. Avoidance of punishment becomes the greater priority and the core value of honesty begins to fade from black and white to a dull gray - something to be interpreted to suit the occasion.

Sometimes we avoid telling the truth to protect our reputation, particularly when we are embarrassed about a mistake in judgment. If we lead people to draw the wrong conclusion through our incomplete or exaggerated stories, we are being dishonest. There is no such thing as a white lie. They are all black. Honesty is not only what we say, but also what we do and how we treat people. If we do a shoddy job and charge for excellent service, then we have robbed our client.

When we are dishonest our reputation is often irrevocably tarnished. Others will cease to trust or respect us. We lose friends, marriages, jobs and freedom.

When parents are dishonest, they create dishonest children. My husband, Brian, says that he has some kids at school who literally appear to have no conscience. We thought it was inbuilt, but in current culture, with generations of dishonesty, conscience is left undeveloped.

Our kids will learn the simple principle of honesty when we model it. We must do as we say so they will learn to do the same. Kids need to be praised when they have shown honesty and integrity. If they find money, they need to make an effort to find an owner before keeping it. If they make a wrong choice then they need to take responsibility, suffer the consequences and not try to blame others.

A major part of maturity is in doing the right thing whether people see us or not. That is what we want our kids to do. Setting clear values will help teach

your kids how to be honest. Write down your expectations and train your kids how to abide by them. You might say that, "Honesty in our house means we tell the truth at all times, we don't exaggerate, we don't tell half truths or 'white lies', we confess when we make a mistake or break something, we take responsibility for our own actions, and we treat people fairly.

We have to prepare our kids for the real world. Dishonesty is everywhere and we need our kids to learn to resist the temptation to settle for the gray instead of the freedom that a clear conscience gives us. We want our kids to be respected and trusted and for their reputations to be, and to remain, impeccable.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.