



## Teaching Your Children Values

By Richard Eyre, Linda Eyre

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## **Editorial Review**

From Library Journal

The authors present practical methods to teach children about values over a 12-month period. The Eyres are the authors of several parenting books (e.g., *Teaching Children Joy*, Ballantine, 1986) as well as hosts of the television show *Families Are Forever*. Their latest book is well researched and interesting. The authors cover a wide range of values, including honesty, courage, peaceability, self-reliance, self-discipline, fidelity and chastity, loyalty, respect, love, unselfishness, kindness, and justice. Each value is examined alongside anecdotes that involve the authors' children. Many activities (games, awards, family meetings, etc.) are recommended for preschoolers, adolescents, and teenagers. This book will prove helpful to both parents and teachers. Highly recommended for most libraries.

- *Jennifer Langlois, Missouri Western State Coll. Lib., St. Joseph*

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### **About the Author**

Richard Eyre is the author or coauthor of sixteen books. He and his wife head the international parents cooperative organisation, S.J.S. Homebase.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Month 1:**

#### **Honesty**

*Honesty with other individuals, with institutions, with society, with self. The inner strength and confidence that is bred by exacting truthfulness, trustworthiness, and integrity.*

Pulling into the driveway one day, I noticed a broken milk bottle on the pavement. I asked nine-year-old Josh and his friend, Chip, if they knew how it happened. Chip quickly said no. Josh looked over at him, somewhat startled, then walked over and put his hand on Chip's shoulder and said, "It's okay, he'll understand." Then to me, "The basketball hit it, Dad. Sorry. We were going to dean it up, bat we forgot. Come on, Chip, I'll get the dustpan."

I listened through the window as they were sweeping up. "One thing I've learned," Josh was counseling Chip, a full six months his junior, "is that you get in a lot less trouble when you just go ahead and tell the truth." -- **Richard**

## **TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN VALUES**

Teaching children honesty can be a real challenge, given the examples of dishonesty that they will encounter every day in the world around them. Your example, and your constant feedback about your child's behavior, can be a powerful influence on your child. Along with your example, we have discovered some other teaching methods that work. These methods are presented (as they are in each chapter) in four brief sections. First, general guidelines for children of all ages; then methods aimed at preschoolers, elementary-age children, and adolescents.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

*Be completely honest with your children.* This will show them how always applicable the principle is and will demonstrate your commitment to it. Answer their questions truthfully and candidly unless it is a question that is off-limits, and then tell them simply and honestly why you won't answer it. Never let them hear you tell little "convenient lies" on the phone and never ask them to tell one for you ("My mommy isn't home"). Don't exaggerate. Don't threaten to do things you don't really intend to do.

*Give praise and the chance to "start over."* This gives children a quick second chance to be truthful. Don't be anxious to "catch" your children in a lie. Instead "catch them telling the truth" and praise them for it. If they do tell (or begin to tell) what you think is an untruth, interrupt and say, "Wait, think for a minute. Remember that it's important to tell the truth." Then let them start over.

*Point out consequences.* Show your children the cause-and-effect dynamics of honesty and dishonesty. Watch for situations (in real life, on TV, etc.) where a dishonest act was performed. Point out the consequences to both the object of the act (the person or institution that was cheated or hurt or deceived) and the doer of the act. Also look for illustrations of honesty and mention the positive consequences, especially the inner peace, confidence, and self-respect gained by the honest individual.

## Methods for Preschoolers

### The Demonstration Game

This game can help small children grasp the concept and know the terminology.

Ask, "Do you know the difference between something that's true and something that's not true? Let's see if you do. I'll say something and you say, 'True' or 'Not true.'" Start with simple physical facts and move toward things relating to behavior, for example:

- \* The sky is green. (Kids say, "Not true.")
- \* (Point at foot) This is my foot. (Kids say, "True.")
- \* Ants are bigger than elephants.
- \* We see with our eyes.
- \* We hear with our nose.
- \* Milk comes from chickens.
- \* Take a cookie out of a jar and eat it. Then say, "I didn't eat the cookie."
- \* Drop a toy on the couch. Then say, "Yes, I left my toy on the couch."

Then say, "You really *can* tell the difference between true and not true, can't you? Do you know what it's called when someone says something that's not true? It's called a *lie*."

Now: "I'll say some more things and you say, 'Truth' if it's true and 'Lie' if it's not true."

\* Pick up a dollar on the floor. Then say, "I didn't find a dollar."

\* Give a bit of food to someone else. Then say, "No, I didn't eat all my food. I gave some of it to --."

(Use illustrations appropriate to your child or children.)

Then ask, "Why is telling the truth better than telling a lie?" (So that everyone knows what really happened; so the wrong person won't get blamed; so we can learn to do better, etc.)

### **Give Effusive, Elaborate Praise**

This encourages honesty on a day-to-day basis. Preschoolers will repeat behavior they receive attention for. They prefer positive attention (praise) to negative attention (reproval or punishment), but they prefer negative attention to no attention at all.

Therefore, when small children lie, try to give them as little attention as possible (other than quietly letting them know that you know it's not the truth). When they tell the truth, praise them extravagantly. And when they tell the truth in terms of admitting they did something wrong ("Who wrote on this wall?"), make the praise you give them for telling the truth outweigh the punishment or redress you give them for what they did. Preschoolers can understand the distinction and the separation between your displeasure with what they did and your pleasure with their truthfulness.

One interesting development in our family efforts to teach honesty occurred when our twenty-month-old baby, Charity, learned two new words. She already knew how to say the names of each of her eight brothers and sisters (or at least her version of those names). Then one week she learned two new words: *did it*. With those words and her siblings' names she became an instant, expert tattletale. Whenever we asked, "Who made this mess?" or "Who squeezed the toothpaste out?" little Charity, who is a marvelously observant child, would tell us the answer.

One result was that the other children became more thoroughly honest -- or at least more *quickly* honest about what they had done. Charity the Enforcer, one of her brothers began to call her. -- **Richard**

### **The Honesty-About-Feelings Game**

This will help small children realize that feelings are caused by what has happened -- and that it is okay to feel things and okay to tell others honestly how we feel. Go through a magazine (one with lots of ads and colored pictures) and point at faces saying, "How do you think he feels?" Then say, "Why do you think he feels that way?" Then say, "Is it okay to feel that way?"

Help children to identify feelings and their probable causes and to know that it's okay to feel those things and to tell other people how they feel.

### **Methods for Elementary**

#### **The Consequence Game**

This game can help children understand that the long-term consequences of honesty are always better than the long-term consequences of dishonesty.

Prepare pairs of simple index cards or small sheets of paper. On one side of each of the cards in the pair describe two alternative courses of action -- one honest and one dishonest -- along with the short-term consequences of each action. Fill out the other side of the cards so that when the two cards are flipped over, the long-term consequences are revealed. Play it as a game, letting children decide, by looking at the front sides only, which option they would take.

*Front sides:*

You are at the store buying something and the clerk gives you \$10 too much change. You keep it. After all, it was his mistake and not yours. You go into the toy store next door and buy some new handle grips for your bike.

When the clerk gives you the \$10 extra change, you tell him he has given you too much and give the \$10 back to him. He says thanks, but as you walk out, you start thinking about the new handle grips you could have bought with the \$10.

*Reverse sides:*

You know the money wasn't yours. You start to worry that the clerk will have to pay the store \$10 out of his wages. Whenever you ride your bike, the new handle grips remind you that you were dishonest.

You feel good and strong inside because you were honest. Whenever you ride your bike, you remember that you need handle grips, but you also remember that you were honest.

*Front sides:*

You are sitting in class taking a really hard test that you forgot to study for. The girl across the aisle seems to know all the answers, and her paper is so easy to see. You copy a few answers and end up getting an A- on the test.

You're a little mad at yourself for not studying harder and you're really worried about your grade. Still, you keep your eyes on your paper and do your best. Unfortunately your best that day is only a C on the test.

*Reverse sides:*

Your conscience bothers you. You know that you didn't deserve the A. You wonder if anyone saw you cheating. It's a little hard for you to get to sleep that night. On the next test you're unprepared again.

You resolve to study harder. Next test you do better. You like yourself because you know you are honest. Other people like you because they know you can be trusted.

Develop other cards to meet your own situation. Let the short-term consequence of a dishonest act be good, the long-term consequence bad. Develop cards on honesty with parents, with siblings, with friends, with institutions, and so on.

After playing the game ask the question What could a person do if he made the dishonest choice and felt bad about it afterward? (He could return the money, apologize, etc.)

## **The Honesty Pact**

Decide in advance, within your family, to be strictly honest with each other. Toward the end of this "month" on honesty, get together as a family around the dinner table or on an outing. Thank the children for their help in thinking about honesty during the month. Review what everyone has learned. Ask if anyone knows what a "pact" is. Suggest that the family have a pact of strict honesty so that every family member can explicitly trust every other family member. Write up a short pact, starting with the words "We promise each other..." Let everyone (parents and children) sign the pact.

### **The Honesty-Under-Pressure Award**

This is a motivational way to get children to evaluate their personal honesty every week. On Sundays (or whatever day you most often get your whole family together for a meal) ask, "Who had a situation this past week where it was a challenge to be honest?" Have an "award" on hand to give to the person who remembers the best incident of being honest. A piece of construction paper or colored card with a neatly printed H.U.P. (Honesty Under Pressure) will do nicely as the award. Let the child (or adult) who wins put it on his bedroom door during the week until it is awarded again the next week.

After a couple of weeks of "getting used to," you will find that children are willing to think hard about their behavior of the past week in hopes of winning the award. And it is this kind of thinking and recognition that strongly reinforces honesty.

### **Story: "Isabel's Little Lie"**

Tell the following story to help your children understand how one lie can lead to another and produce serious consequences:

One day Isabel told a little lie. She wasn't supposed to feed her dinner to her dog, Barker, but she did, and when her mother came in and saw her plate all clean, Isabel said that she had eaten it all. (That was a little lie, wasn't it?) The dinner was chicken, and Barker got a bone in his throat. Pretty soon he started to cough and snort and act very uncomfortable.

"Do you know what's wrong with Barker?" asked Mother. "No," said Isabel. (That was another lie, wasn't it? But Isabel *had* to do it so that Mother wouldn't know she told the first lie.) Mother looked in Barker's mouth but couldn't see anything. "Did Barker eat something, Isabel?"

"I don't know, Mommy." (That was another lie, wasn't it? But she didn't want her mother to know about the first two lies.)

Barker got worse, and Mother took him to the animal hospital. Isabel went too. "What happened to the dog?" asked the doctor. "We don't know," said Isabel. (That was another lie, wasn't it? But if Isabel had told, then Mother and the dog doctor would know she had lied before.) The dog doctor said, "If it's just a bone, we could get it out with an instrument, but it might be glass, so we may have to operate."

Isabel decided it was time to tell the truth. She said, "It's a bone, and I *did* know Barker ate it, and I *didn't* eat all my dinner, and I *did* give it to Barker, and I won't tell lies anymore, because if you tell one, you might have to tell more and more." Isabel started to cry, but her mother loved her and she decided she really would tell the truth from then on.

(Note: Each chapter will have one or more children's stories illustrating that month's value -- written for elementary-age children but adaptable for younger or older children.)

## **The Pantomime Game**

This game can help children to identify honest emotions -- in themselves and in others -- and to know that it is okay to feel and to talk about these emotions.

Write each of the following emotion-related adjectives on a small card. Shuffle the cards and give five to each family member. Each player has forty-five seconds to pantomime the actions (gestures, facial expressions, etc.) associated with the word on the card. Score one point for each motion correctly guessed. After each person has a turn, shuffle the cards and distribute five to each person again and repeat the process until one person scores 10 points. Eventually children will learn how to better display the emotions they feel as well as how to recognize them in others. The idea is to help children to accept their own emotions, recognize how others are feeling, and be able to talk honestly about both.

Here is a list of emotions, feelings, and attitudes to pantomime:

loving

kind

optimistic

empathetic

grateful

loyal

sensitive

active

sly

mean

angry

envious

selfish

spoiled

resentful

remorseful

appreciative

nice

affectionate

serene

friendly

free

respectful

untruthful

unfriendly

defensive

fair

sorry

rude

concerned

trusting

calm

warm

tender

responsible

reliable

cooperative

honorable

foolish

greedy

unfair

insensitive

unequal

thoughtful

cheerful

helpful

forgiving

interested

gentle

passive

hurt

jealous

guilty

annoyed

disgusted

remorseful

cowardly

## **Methods for Adolescents**

### **Analyze Types of Dishonesty**

This kind of discussion can help older children to grasp the broader definitions of honesty and dishonesty.

Say, "There are really a lot of different types of dishonesty. Let's see how many we can list." With some encouragement children will list many of the following:

Cheating on tests

Cheating on taxes

Cheating on expense reports

Calling a ball out in a tennis game that you're not sure was out

Exaggerating

Telling someone they look nice when they really don't (flattery)

Not telling the whole truth so you won't get in trouble

Twisting the truth just a little so it won't sound so bad

Lying to protect yourself

Lying to protect someone else

Keep the list growing by asking subquestions, such as What are some kinds of dishonesty to parents? What are some kinds of dishonesty to self?

Saying you got in earlier than you really did

Not being able to admit it when you are scared or worried or insecure

### **Discuss Types of Dishonesty**

Follow up on the foregoing discussion of types of dishonesty to help children to want total honesty for themselves. Ask, "Are any of these forms of dishonesty okay? What about white lies or little exaggerations? (Help them to see that even "little lies" are usually unnecessary: You can think a little harder and come up with an honest compliment; you don't really need to exaggerate, etc. If you're going to be honest, why not be completely honest?)

### **Opposite Word: Which Helps? Which Hurts?**

This activity can help children grasp the *effects* of honesty and of its opposites on other people. Ask your children for antonyms or opposites of dishonesty (go beyond *dishonesty* to words like *deceptive* or *lie* or *cheat*, then ask *how* these words hurt and *whom* they can hurt. Ask how honesty helps and whom it can help.

(Note: There is a similar "help or hurt" method in each chapter dealing with that month's value and its opposites).

The acceptance of "white lies" may be one reason that many people discount the whole notion of values. There is a feeling of inner confidence and security that comes with uncompromising honesty, and we should help our children to have that power even if we have not always had it ourselves.

### **Share Your Own Honesty Dilemmas**

This can help demonstrate to older children that you are willing to be honest with them -- even about your own struggles with honesty. Be brave enough to tell your children about times when you have had a hard time being honest. Tell them "positive" incidents when you were honest and negative ones when you weren't -- and tell them about any current situations where you are struggling to be completely honest.

This kind of sharing is quite a compliment to your older children because it expresses your confidence in their maturity. Nothing will inspire more trust from them or encourage them more to share *their* struggles with you.

**Nothing impresses young adolescents more than drama...and the dilemmas that certain kinds of drama can depict. While living in London, we took our twelve- and fourteen-year-old to the marvelous stage musical *Les Misérables*, based on Victor Hugo's great work of fiction. In one scene Jean Valjean, the fugitive and former convict whose life has been changed by the love and generosity of an old priest, learns that another man who resembles him has been apprehended for his crime and is about to go on trial. The other man is a drifter of no consequence, while Jean Valjean has become a wealthy and important man on whom many depend. He sings a song about the agony of his conscience: "If I come forward, I am condemned. If I stay silent, I am damned." Then he does step forward, saving the other man and preserving his own integrity.**

**After the show I asked the children what they liked best. "The part about the conscience," said our twelve-year-old. "He did what was right. He told the truth, and that's the reason that everything worked out in the end." -- Richard**

### **The Scenario Game**

This game will help children think through situations in advance. Define *scenario* as "a projected possibility with consequences." Then define possibility and consequences (appeal to the adolescent desire to use big words and "speak grown-up"). Then, in your own words, expand and elaborate on the following "case studies." The more dramatic and storylike, the better.

*Cheating.* You're sitting in your English class, taking the final exam. You've studied hard, and the first two sections of the test are easy. The last section is much harder, and you realize it is from a book you forgot to review. You're pretty sure the teacher never told you to read that book. You feel mad at the teacher and that it's not your fault that you don't know the answers. The questions are multiple choice, and it's extremely easy to see Jim's answers across the aisle.

*Exaggerating.* Your family has just moved to town. You've started at a new school and made some brand-new friends. In the lunchroom they are asking what you did in sports at your former school. You were actually only a substitute on one team, but they don't know that. You wonder if you should tell them what you wish had happened, instead of what actually did.

*Protecting yourself.* You got in an hour later than your parents had requested. They had fallen asleep, so you didn't disturb them. It's now the morning after, and they ask you what time you came in.

*Think of other scenarios* (or use actual situations that you know of). Help your children (through discussion) arrive at the conclusion (and project it into each case study) that most dishonesty seems to solve a short-term problem or create a short-term benefit but leads to less confidence in self over the long run.

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### **Users Review**

#### **From reader reviews:**

##### **Eva Byrd:**

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to perform! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic inside the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something

different to fill your free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book could be option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to attempt look for book, may be the book untitled *Teaching Your Children Values* can be excellent book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

**Joshua Lippert:**

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love *Teaching Your Children Values*, you may enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its named reading friends.

**Sergio Terry:**

*Teaching Your Children Values* can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The copy writer giving his/her effort that will put every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing *Teaching Your Children Values* yet doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be among it. This great information can drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial considering.

**Mark Morrow:**

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you actually, why because this *Teaching Your Children Values* publication written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book that could be understand by anyone who else read the book. Written within good manner for you, still dripping wet every ideas and creating skill only for eliminate your own hunger then you still skepticism *Teaching Your Children Values* as good book not only by the cover but also with the content. This is one publication that can break don't ascertain book by its include, so do you still needing a different sixth sense to pick this kind of!? Oh come on your looking at sixth sense already said so why you have to listening to yet another sixth sense.

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