

# Integrity/Honesty

## Short Lessons

- Give students a series of 10 scenarios in which they could choose to be honest or dishonest. Ask them to privately record what choices they would make in each situation. Collect the papers and give each student an “honesty” rating based on their choices. Return the papers to students at the next class.
- Play the song, “Honesty,” recorded by Billy Joel. Divide the stanzas into sections (you may want to leave out some stanzas as inappropriate). Assign groups of students to discuss what each stanza means and present their interpretation to the class.
- Discuss ways in which dishonesty in government affects the taxpayer. You could use examples of cheating on income taxes or larger political situations such as Watergate.
- Ask students to brainstorm times when they feel tempted to be dishonest. Divide those times by whether they involve family members, friends, or strangers. After you’ve discussed why students would be dishonest in those situations, turn the situations around so that the student is the one being lied to. How do they feel now?
- Discuss cheating on homework. What are the effects of not being honest in school?
- Ask students for examples from TV programs that make dishonesty seem glamorous. Can they recognize dishonesty even when it seems justified?
- Discuss classroom disruptions. Do disruptions “steal” learning time from others?
- Draw pictures of popular-style hats flying through the air. Label the hats with actions that demonstrate honesty, such as “return money you find,” “tell the truth,” “don’t steal,” and other examples that fit your students. Use the header, “Hats off to honest people.”
- Show a picture of a student looking stumped. Use the header, “Are you honest enough to say, ‘I don’t know’?”
- Tell the students that Charles Schulz is the creator of the “Peanuts” cartoon, which appears daily in many papers across the country. Remind them of some of the characters in the cartoon like Charlie Brown, Lucy, Pig Pen, Snoopy, Linus, etc. Tell them one cartoon showed Peppermint patty trying to get Marcie to tell her the answers to a question during a test. Marcie explained that giving out test answers would be cheating and Peppermint Patty agreed, but later Marcie told her the answer anyway.

Explain to the students that it is dishonest to copy someone’s answers during a test. Also explain that it is dishonest to give someone answers during a test. Encourage the children to practice honesty at school then ask the following questions:

1. Do you think Marcie and Peppermint Patty were being honest?
2. Were they being fair?
3. Why do you think Marcie gave Peppermint Patty the answer?
4. How could Peppermint Patty have avoided this situation?
5. How could Marcie have handled this differently?
6. What can you do when you are tempted to cheat?
7. What should you do when someone asks you for the answer to a test question?

- Read the following scenario to the class: During a science test you glance at your friend's test. You copy some of his answers on your paper. As the teacher grades the papers, she notices that you and your friend got the same answer wrong. The teacher confronts you about this. If you do not admit what you have done, the teacher might accuse your friend of copying. If you admit this, you'll fail the test.

1. What might happen if your friend is accused of cheating?
2. Will you feel guilty?
3. What if someone finds out that you lied?
4. How will that change their feelings about you?
5. What is the best solution to this situation?
6. What will keep this situation from happening again?

- Long ago in ancient Israel, an old rabbi wanted to test the honesty of his three disciples. He deliberately left some money in a place where each would find it and waited to see how each reacted.

The first disciple very quickly told the rabbi he would return the money to the owner. The rabbi thought this was the right thing to do but questioned the sincerity of the disciple. Was he saying what the rabbi wanted to hear or what he would actually do?

The second disciple said he would keep the money if nobody saw him. The rabbi admired the disciple's frankness but was not happy with his answer. He would not trust this man.

The third disciple said he would want to keep the money but would finally try to return it to the person who lost it. If he did not try to give it back, his conscience would bother him.

"Now," thought the rabbi, "I have found a man I can truly trust."

1. Which disciple would you choose as the most honest?
2. Why did the rabbi think the third disciple was the most honest?
3. Do you ever have to make decisions that are not easy?
4. Are there times at school when you have to decide between being honest or telling a lie?
5. How do you feel when you are not honest?

- Write five to ten of the character traits on the board. (The number of traits chosen will be dependent on the developmental level of the students targeted for the lesson.) Make sure the character trait for the lesson is included randomly in the list. The students will guess the trait after hearing clues read by the teacher. (The teacher may choose to write the clues on the board.) Only one clue at a time will be given. The teacher will decide how many guesses are allowed before another clue is given.

Some suggested clues are:

1. I am the trait possessed by one who is sincere and genuine.
2. I am a trait possessed by George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
3. My base word is not a lie.
4. I am the trait that robbers and burglars do not have.
5. I am the trait that keeps you from cheating.

- **Honest Abe**

In advance, make a replica of a stove-pipe hat by covering a large coffee can with black construction paper. Tape a round, black construction paper base to the can as a brim. Place the hat on a table in the center of the room. Read *Abe Lincoln's Hat* aloud. Discuss Abe's honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness as described in the story. Distribute writing paper. Have students write a paragraph or draw a picture describing a time when they were honest even though it was difficult. Ask each student to place the paper in Abe Lincoln's hat (the coffee can) – just like he

did in the story! One at a time, pull the paragraphs or pictures from the hat and invite students to read or explain them to the class. After all experiences are shared, have the class applaud themselves for being like Honest Abe.

- **Honesty is the Best Policy**

Write several situations that require honesty on individual index cards, such as *you found a wallet with \$100 in it. What might you do?* Divide the students into groups of four. Have each group choose a card. Give groups five minutes to discuss their situations and choose a way to resolve them. Have each group share their situations and solution. Invite the class to decide if the solution is a good one and brainstorm other appropriate solutions.

- **Who Are You Going To Call?**

Invite volunteers to name people they trust and explain why. Have students explain why trustworthiness is important in friendship and everyday life. On the chalkboard, display the following words: *Parents, Friends, Teachers, Police*. Distribute four index cards to each student. Have students copy a word on each card. Tell students they will hear a series of “who are you going to call” problems such as *You failed a math test and need extra help. Who are you going to call?* Invite students to consider each problem and choose a group of people (from those on the cards) they would trust to help with their problem. Have students show their choices by holding up a card. Read and invite students to respond to several situations. Invite volunteers to explain why they made their choices.