

PARENT INSPIRATION

Parenting Teens

Who Me, Cheat?

Here are the facts! Nearly two-thirds (71 %) of high school students admit they cheated on an exam at least once in the past 12 months. Forty-six percent said they did so two or more times.¹

Almost all (92 %) lied to their parents in the past 12 months. Seventy-nine percent lied to a teacher. Fifty-eight percent lied two or three times. More than one-quarter (27 %) said they would lie to get a job.¹

Forty percent of males and 30 percent of females say they stole something from a store in the past 12 months.¹

Sad as these current statistics are, they also say something about the future. Young people are much more cynical than their elders. They are considerably more likely to believe that it is necessary to lie or cheat in order to succeed. Cheaters in high school are far more likely as adults to lie to their spouses, customers and employers, and to cheat on expense reports and insurance claims.¹

So what's a parent to do? *Admit that we can't keep our children from lying and cheating. Sometimes it's experimental.* They do so out of fear or they see other kids getting by with it and wonder what rules work for them. Being consistent and not over-reacting is important. Having age-appropriate conversations about our values, plans and goals for our children help set them up for success.

Others are like Crystal, 13 years old, who said, "If you try one big lie, you're going to keep doing it, over and over."¹ Michael Josephson, the founder of the Josephson Institute on Ethics¹, suggests that such attitudes and practices of teens reveal "a hole in the moral ozone." He further states, "Being sure children can read is certainly essential, but it is no less important that we deal with the alarming rate of cheating, lying and violence that threatens the very fabric of our society."

So what's a parent to do? *Be mindful that you are potentially the best and most important teacher of your child.* As a Christian parent, turn to Scripture, read books on character development and learn about child development. Exercise your faith. Teach your children to live with honesty and integrity day by day. Character is developed more from what is "caught" than what is "taught."

Consistency, concreteness and creativity are all important in instilling morals and values to a child, suggests Josephson. The moral meanings we send must be clear, consistent and repetitive. Over and over, use specific language that conveys your values for trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship. Messages need to be explicit, direct and relevant to the lives of your children. Role-playing, using games, and being actively involved in your child's relationships with others, allowing them to make real decisions, and using teachable moments are all creative ways of developing character in children.

To a great extent, parents hold in their own hands the future happiness of their children. Upon them rests the important work of forming the character of these children. The instructions given in childhood will follow them all through life. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 686

REFLECT

Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.

1 Timothy 1:19 NLT

A half truth is a whole lie.

Yiddish Proverb

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. Thomas Jefferson

Let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. John Wesley

Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you. Spanish Proverb

TAKE ACTION

As a family, create a notebook or scrapbook of character building quotations.

Commend teens when they choose not to cheat. Share tough choices you've made – talk about the impact of each.

Complete the *Christian Teen Honesty Quiz: How Truthful Are You?* christianteens.about.com/od/christianliving/a/honestyquiz.htm

LEARN MORE

1. *Josephson Institute of Ethics*, M Josephson
josephsoninstitute.org

2. *How to Be Honest With Friends*, K Mahoney
christianteens.about.com/od/advice/a/HonestWFriends.htm



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