

Ain't it the Truth?

By Marvin W Berkowitz, PhD

Lying is epidemic among youth today.

Professor Don McCabe of Rutgers University is one of the nation's gurus on academic dishonesty. His research on high school students shows that nearly 2 out of every 3 students admits to copying from someone else's test. Over 3 out of 4 report having gotten test answers from someone who had already taken the test and nearly 9 out of 10 let someone else copy their homework. And the list goes on.

Honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, or whatever you want to call it, is a cornerstone of good character.

So what is a parent to do?

How can we help foster honesty in our kids?

A new book by parenting expert Michele Borba offers some very helpful advice. The book is entitled [No More Misbehavin': 38 Difficult Behaviors and How to Stop Them](#). It offers very practical advice to parents on effective strategies for reducing undesirable behavior in their children.

So let's take a look at what she has to say about honesty and lying.

Borba suggest seven strategies for this type of behavior.

- Expect and demand honesty
- Reinforce honesty
- Use moral questioning
- Don't overreact
- Teach the difference between real and make believe
- Explain why dishonesty is wrong
- Set a consequence for repeat dishonesty.

Let's examine a few of these.

First, you need to make sure that your child knows that you care deeply about honesty. Tell them.

Then, when you catch them in the act of telling the truth, especially when it is against their best interests to be honest, let them know how proud you are.

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And be sure to ask them if they understand the consequences of their actions when they lie; especially the consequences to others.

But be sure that you don't overreact if what your child is doing is just a cry for attention. Sometimes they misbehave as a desperate way to get you to pay attention to them. However, if this is consistently true then it is time to seriously question how you have gotten yourself (and your child) into such a sad relationship.

If you follow Borba's suggestions, especially if you start early in your child's life, then you are likely to be a great character educator and your child is likely to develop good character.

And that's no lie.