

STEALING

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

Stealing is a conscious decision to hurt someone. In Project Self-Esteem, we talk to children about something they may not have considered: If your father owned a store and people came in and stole things out of the store, how would that hurt him? One of the answers is that the father paid money for the items in the store, and if lots of items are stolen he will not have enough money for his family.

EXAMPLE: I once caught Kathleen and Scott playing with stickers that I did not buy. I did not ask the obvious question, "Did you steal those stickers?" Instead, I said, "You know, I don't remember buying those stickers. This is a hard question. Where did you get those stickers?" Both children looked guilty. I called the store telling them that two darling children were coming in to pay for stickers they had stolen. I would appreciate it if the person they talk to would mention that they lose lots of money because people steal things, and thank them for their payment.

When Kathleen asked me if I were going into the store with them, I said, "I didn't steal the stickers, you did. I will be right here when you come out of the store." Two pale faced children went into the store, paid for the stickers and said nothing on the way home. When we got home, they had a chore to do to repay me for the sticker money. There were no more lectures or consequences. The lesson had been learned.

One of the things I see, working with at-risk kids, is that they have never been taught **EMPATHY**. They haven't been taught to consider how upsetting it would be to have someone throw a rock off of a car if the car belonged to your mother, father or to you. The car belongs to someone. Hurting people's property is not acceptable. Taking something that belongs to someone else is not acceptable.

The most difficult concept to teach children is to do something because **IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO**. You do this most effectively by what you model. Talk to your children, "I was given too much change today, so I took it back." When the child asks, "Why did you take it back? No one would know you had it." respond, "I would know."

Stealing is a conscious decision to hurt another person. You are not allowed to steal. This rule will not be effective unless you model it.