

TELLING THE TRUTH

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

Your child comes up to you asking, "Are you angry, Mom?" You grit your teeth and snarl, "No, I'm fine." The child has no resource to decide you are lying, so the first place he/she goes is to distrust his/her intuition. Whenever I have ignored my "gut" feeling, my life has gone in the trash can. One way to assist a child in developing self-trust is to say, "Yes, I am angry, but it has nothing to do with you. A hug would feel really good right now....(hug).....Now, I need some space to work it out. I am not angry with you, OK?"

If we were to tell the truth, always, everything would change. Why don't we? When an angry parent snarled, "Who ate the cookie?" we denied even knowing that cookies existed. When we stated a feeling and a parent said, "That's silly, you don't feel that way!", we denied our true feelings. Sometimes, we were taught to lie so we didn't hurt someone's feelings. You can't hurt someone's feelings; a person chooses to be hurt. The lie that we hurt each other has been perpetuated through the years in order to control children. "I feel hurt when you tell me you hate me," is a truth. "You hurt me so badly when you said you hate me," is a lie.

The difference between a person with personal power and a powerless person is that you don't walk on egg shells around a powerful person. You speak your truth, the powerful person speaks his/her truth and an enormous trust is built between the two of you.

Pay attention. Count how many times you compromise on the truth in one day, one week, one month. When I did this, it amazed me that I was so attached to "white lies." Choosing to always tell the truth has been a very difficult process, and I like being a person people can trust.

When your child lies to you, be firm but friendly, "What you just said is not true. We tell the truth in our family even when it is hard to do that. Now....tell me what was happening with you when you and Jeff started that fight." If you don't tell the truth, by all means don't express it as a family standard--all children have built-in discrepancy detectors!

With a child who tells very imaginative stories say, "Wow! You have the greatest imagination! I love your stories! What you need to do now is to tell the truth."

Watch what you tell your children. Watch what you model for your children. If the truth lives in your home it will be a safe place where everyone can grow and learn.