

The Cheating Game!

by Audrey Raj



Although it's not uncommon for parents to hear that their child has been caught cheating at school, it's still very important to understand the motives behind this behaviour. We outline how you can handle such a situation in a constructive and supportive way.

Lying and cheating are issues that all parents face with children at some point or another. Whether it's lying about breaking a toy, or cheating to get a better test score, adults must be firm in explaining that this is unacceptable behaviour.

The urge to bend the rules often comes to children during play as well as in school, and this can begin as early as the preschool years.

A dishonest youngster will cheat at games, then often deny that any rule was broken, claiming innocence in that he didn't really understand the rules to begin with.

Through such deceitful measures a child may accomplish the desired end result, but he won't be able to understand that he is really cheating himself, and not just his classmates or friends.

Of course, the child who cheats academically will fail to understand the curriculum and eventually fall behind his classmates in terms of grasping educational concepts.

If this behaviour prolongs, it may even result in poor relationships with family and friends, a loss of self-confidence, and unnecessary societal troubles when he grows older.

By understanding why children cheat, it is easier for parents to come to terms with what to do. Acknowledging your child's

deceitful acts and getting to the reasons why, will help you to practice preventive discipline.

It's important that your little one knows that you respect laws, rules and regulations, and that you expect the same from him.

The Motives Behind Cheating

Keep in mind that when a preschooler cheats, he is not mentally ready or mature enough to understand its consequences.

So this deceit may be an attempt to be competitive, rather than outright dishonesty.

Since our society places so much importance on winning, success and getting good grades, these factors sometimes compel our youngsters to cheat.

Most children strive to get in the good books of their parents and teachers. So to gain acceptance from these significant adults, the temptation to cheat can occur from time to time.

Ms. Geraldine Tan Twang Ling, a Registered Psychologist at the Centre for Effective Living explains, "Children tend to want to do well in order to please their parents. Even before they attend school,

they learn to respond to their parents in the manner that invokes the most positive response."

Other reasons why a young child may result to cheating include:

- To prevent looking stupid or silly in front of others;
- To simply get a higher grade;
- To keep up with friends;
- To especially look better than others;
- To avoid getting into trouble;
- Low self-esteem; and
- Peer pressure.

Acknowledging your child's deceitful acts and getting to the reasons why, will help you to practice preventive discipline.

Corrective Behaviour

You can lessen the impulse to cheat by teaching your child the consequences for this type of inappropriate action, plus by regularly monitoring his school work and homework.

"Firstly, find out the reason why your child was cheating, and then ask him if he was having difficulty understanding that particular subject or game. Once you know the cause for his action, keep a look out to see if your child displays similar behaviour in other areas," advises Geraldine Tan.

Naturally, if you don't want your child to cheat don't ever cheat him, because even your slightest unintentional deception will influence his young mind.

Purposely ignoring a cashier who forgets to charge you for an item, will undoubtedly lead your child to think that such dishonesty is acceptable.

It's important that your little one knows that you respect laws, rules and regulations, and that you expect the same from him.

However, when you've caught your child cheating once and you've corrected him, don't automatically assume that he will cheat again in similar circumstances.

You should give him the benefit of the doubt, or he'll be hurt that you don't trust him, and this may even lead to him deceiving once again. ☒

Beating The Cheating...

Here are some ways parents can beat the cheating behaviour from an early age:

- Regularly discuss with your little one why cheating is wrong. Be clear about your own moral beliefs and pass them on to your child;
- Let your child know how much you appreciate his truthfulness and honest efforts. Make honesty the priority in your home;
- Set a consequence for repeat cheating. Excusing or ignoring your child's cheating is the same as giving it your approval;
- Discuss the negative results of cheating. Tell your youngster how it can affect others and himself in the long term;
- Convince your child that you respect his efforts and actions. For example, tell him a truthful grade 'C' is much better than an dishonest grade 'B'; and
- Avoid judgments like "You're a cheat!" or "Why can't you ever be honest?", because a child will often use parental labels to define himself.