

The Most Important Lesson Parents Need to Teach Children

Most moral lessons that stick with you best through example. I remember the main moral lessons and examples from my childhood vividly.

One of them is the apocryphal story of George Washington and the cherry tree.

Little George Washington was apparently a bloody ax-murderer in making, and he decided to practice his skills on his father's cherry tree. Upon being caught, he chose to tell his father.

"Father, I cannot tell a lie,"

There may have been repercussions for cutting down that cherry tree, but I believe the story ended with George and his father embracing, or otherwise going on happily. George's honesty (and his courage to be honest) was rewarded.

The moral lesson here is that honesty is rewarded. Put another way, it teaches that **if you tell the truth and move toward what's right, everything will work out fine in the end.**

I can think of no more important lesson for parents to teach children.

I didn't just get it in stories. That was the example my parents set for me and the standard against which I was measured. It still took me 18 years to really get the importance of truth and to start living with it.

How much harder must it be for young people whose parents did not model truthfulness that ends well?

If your parents punish you for speaking truth, if your society is rigged against truth, if everything in your environment tells you it's dangerous and destructive to be true, you're going to live your life afraid of truth. **And being afraid of truth is no different from being afraid of reality. That's everything, yo.**

The most important gift you can give your children is the assurance that if they tell the truth and do right, reality will respond to them favorably.

Tell them the stories where truth wins the day. Praise people who tell hard truths. Tell the truth about yourself, including your failings. Let them see the long-term results of truth-

speaking and integrity by bringing them out on the job with you.

Do whatever it takes to give them the confidence that reality is good and trustworthy. It will pay off in the end. Because “all things working together for the good” isn’t a fairy tale. It’s how things are.