

On Dishonesty

Honesty is a practice that many parents try to teach their children. Unfortunately, many of these same parents do two things that teach the opposite. The first is forcing children to apologize for wrongs they have committed. To force an insincere apology ("Tell her your sorry, now!") is to teach your child that being dishonest about the way they feel in order to make someone else feel better is appropriate. Is it? Or does the other child also learn a salient lesson about sincerity and apology? ("I'll accept your insincere apology. Two can play at this game...") The second is by creating a disincentive to be honest by using punishment as a parenting tool. There is not a child that has ever lived that did not learn to lie to their parents to avoid punishment, which is entirely unnecessary anyway. Now, I'm not inclined to say that honesty is a virtue, but many parents do, and then shoot themselves in both feet. And that's today's two cents.