

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT?

HONESTY

THE DOUBLE STANDARD

OBJECTIVE:

Through class discussion and a headcut, the student will examine the double standard--the ideal vs the real--as it relates to the code of honesty.

NOTES TO THE TEACHER:

In dealing with the question of honesty, we cannot overlook the so-called double standard. Here we are faced with a choice of values and the question really becomes which comes first: the ideal or the real? In dealing with particularly difficult situations, an individual may find him/herself in a position of ideally wanting to do something, and in reality doing the opposite because of a tension that surfaces. The business person who desires success and works very hard to attain it, but makes a serious mistake somewhere along the line which might cost him his job, faces tension. His ideal may be honesty in every situation, but his reaction may be to cover the mistake up and not report it to his boss. He justifies his action in a variety of ways--I'll lose my job, my wife and kids will suffer. I won't be able to make the payments on my house, I have responsibilities toward my family that require an income. So he compromises his ideal--honesty--because of the reality of the situation.

PROCEDURE:

1. Open this lesson with comments similar to the following:

The code of Honesty stands for telling the truth. It requires that we keep our word, that we are reliable in deed. It means that we do not lie, cheat, trick, or deceive other people.

2. The following questions might serve as a basis for discussion in the large group:

- A. Do you think honest people really know how honest they are? Why or why not?
- B. Do you think dishonest people know how dishonest they are? Why or why not?
- C. To be a truly honest person, do you have to tell people all your thoughts? Why or why not?
- D. Is it okay to say nice things even if you don't mean them? Why or why not?
- E. Is it okay to hide true feelings for the sake of politeness and self-protection? Why or why not?
- F. Which is more important: to be nice to people or to be honest and open with them? Explain.

This misconduct is a consequence of the double standards set up by parents: one code of behavior for themselves and another for the child.

6. Distribute copies of the handout, "What's Good For The Goose Is Good For The Gander," and allow sufficient time for silent reading.
7. The following questions may serve as a basis for discussion in a large group:
 - a. Do you think that telling "white lies" lessons a person's individual integrity? Why or why not?
 - b. What is your opinion of Wendy, Mr. Williams and Mrs. Williams in the story you have just read?
 - c. Can little white lies come back to haunt an individual? If so, how?
 - d. Have you ever told a little white lie in order to get out of doing something you didn't want to do?
 - e. Suppose your family or your school asked you to take the following honor code:

"Absolutely no lying. Absolutely no cheating. Absolutely no stealing."
8. Upon completion of the above activity, you may want to comment similar to the following:

We are not perfect people. We all make mistakes. Sometimes we don't measure up and we find ourselves in these positions of compromise. It is at these times that we don't want to lose sight of the ideal--honesty. We should continue to demand that people don't lie, cheat, trick, or deceive others.
10. The teacher may wish to use this reading from Acts 5:1-11 to close the lesson--a rather dramatic tale of double-dealing.

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3. Upon completion of the discussion, you may wish to make comments similar to the following:

Sometimes the code of honesty, the ideal, comes into conflict with other values we might also cherish, the real. What we are then faced with is a choice of values and the question of which comes first. The conflict is created by tension and in attempting to resolve it we sometimes compromise ourselves the double standard is at work.

4. Present the following situations to the students:

a. you and your friend are taking the Biology final exam. Your friend cheats on the exam. Identify the value conflicts involved in this situation, and alternatives available.

Sample response: Honesty (ideal) vs Loyalty (real)

the honest thing to do is report your friend to the teacher. Loyalty might require that you say nothing. (You might want to discuss West Point's honor code scandal)

b. You have a bitter rival in your school. She has wrongly accused you of being a squealer. You want to get even by spreading a false rumor about her. Identify the value conflicts involved in this situation, and the alternatives available.

Sample response: Honesty (ideal) vs. Justice (real)

The honest thing to do is not spread false rumors. Justice requires that you clear your name or reputation in an honest way.

c. You hold an important position with a large firm. Your make a serious mistake that only you know about. Identify the value conflicts involved in this situation and the alternatives available.

Sample response: Honesty vs Success

The honest thing to do is report your mistake. Success may require you to cover it up.

5. The teacher can make a transition with comments similar to the following:

People often times set standards of an ideal behavior for other people which they in turn do not follow. Parents are really adept at doing this. Young people justify their own misconduct by citing the misconduct of others. A child might deliberately deceive his parents after a disillusioning experience with "white lies" on the parents part.