

CHARACTER COUNTS! SM

Being trustworthy will help you build a good reputation.

Trustworthiness means being strong and having the courage to do what is right. It means trying new things even when it is hard, or when you might fail.

Trustworthiness means standing up for your beliefs openly and boldly.

It means to be able to resist the temptation to do what you know is wrong even when doing so will get you something you want or keep you out of trouble.

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TRUSTWORTHINESS

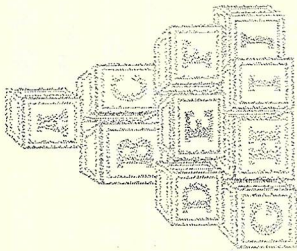
When you think of a person who is trustworthy or honest, who comes to mind? How about Abraham Lincoln? He walked many miles to return a little money when a person gave him back too much change. (His nickname was "Honest Abe") Or how about George Washington? Stories about our first president tell us that as a boy, he told the truth when asked if he chopped down that cherry tree.



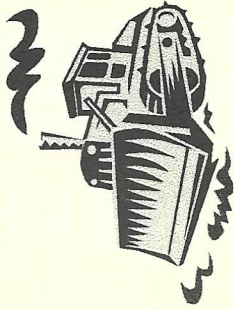
Abe Lincoln & George Washington

How important is it to you to be trustworthy? How important is it to you that your friends and people you do things with be trustworthy?

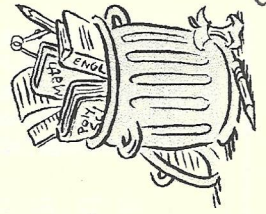
You must understand that trust is necessary if you want to have meaningful personal relationships. If you want to have lifelong rewarding friendships, trust must be there. Trust is necessary for good relationships at work, in organizations, or with elected officials and other policy makers.



Building trust with people is like building a tower. You do it one block at a time and with each person you deal with.



Each time you do something to show that you are trustworthy, you add another block and your tower becomes taller and stronger. You build these towers of trust with everyone you come in contact with. If you do something that is not trustworthy, one of your blocks is removed. With only one block removed your tower may not fall completely, but it will be damaged. It takes a long time to repair damage to your reputation, and people often remember the bad more than the good. Be very careful with your tower of trust. It won't take a "bulldozer" very long to make your tower into a heap of garbage.



In order for you to be a trustworthy person here are some things you must do.

- <> Be honest.
(This means you always tell the facts without exaggerating.)
- <> Don't lie, cheat or steal.
(You will resist the temptation to make your story a little better than the truth.)
- <> Be reliable--do what you say you'll do.
(This means keeping your promises.)
- <> Have the courage to do the right thing.
(Even if you are the only one doing it.)
- <> Build a good reputation.
(Reputation is what other people think of you.)
- <> Be loyal--stand by your family, friends and country.
(This means in good times and when times that are not so good.)

What Would You Do?

(Tell participants that now we are going to try to solve some ethical problems.)

Problem #1--You have a friend who receives food stamps, then, each month sells those food stamps. Is this ethical? Is this legal? What will happen to your friend if he/she is caught?

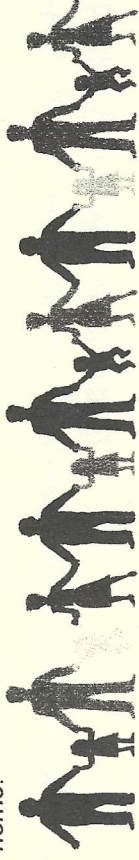
Problem #2--You receive subsidized housing, food stamps and SSI. Then you do odd jobs like mowing lawns, baby-sitting, etc. You don't report this income to those who provide your subsidies. Is this ethical? Is this legal? What will happen if you get caught? Who are you defrauding? Look to your right and then to your left! That's who!! (Same thing with *not reporting income to the IRS*)

Problem #3--You park in a handicapped parking space when you don't have a permit. Is it ethical or legal? Even if others do it, that still doesn't make it all right. (If everyone jumped off the bridge, would you do it too?)

More Thought

1. Why do you think it's important to be honest?
2. Do you think it's hard to be honest? Why?
3. If the tower of trust you have built with someone fell down, what are some of the things you would have to do to rebuild it?
4. Could the behaviors in the problems above cause any group of people to become stereotyped?
5. Is it OK to lie even if everyone else is doing it?

This center section is your discussion guide. Use it after you have read the outside section. Then give each participant a brochure to take home.



Trustworthiness is made up of four parts. They are Honesty, Integrity, Promise-keeping, and Loyalty. In our discussion today we are going to look at the word Trustworthy and what it means. Then we'll look at the first part of Trustworthiness: Honesty!

What do you think it means to "trust" someone?

The word trust means, a firm belief in the honesty, truthfulness, justice or power of a person or thing. It means to have "faith" in someone or something.



Do you remember as a child that you "trusted" your parents. That means that you expected that they would take care of you. They would do the things for you that you needed to have done.

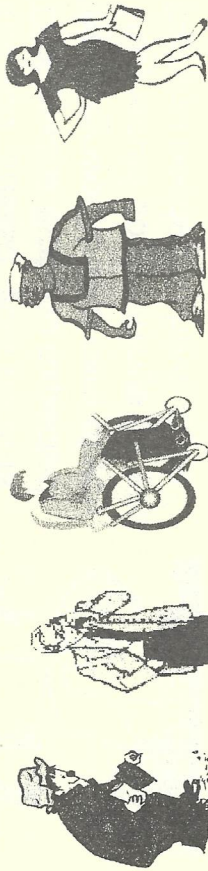
A trustworthy person is one you can depend on. They will always tell you the truth. The word "true" is the opposite of the word false. Something that is true is something that is "not made up". It is real.

When a person testifies in court why do they say, "Do you swear to tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth? (*truth is used 3 times*)

Do you think that trust is something that someone just gives you, or do you think that you have to earn it?

1. How do you earn trust? *(Slowly, by always telling the truth, by keeping your word)*
2. How do you know when you can trust people? *(When they tell you the truth all the time. When they keep their promises to you, have the courage to do the right thing, and are loyal to you.)*
3. Can you think of times when someone you know was not trustworthy? How did that make you feel?
4. Can you think of times when you have had to make a hard decision about some issues of trust?

5. Look at the pictures below. Which of these people can you trust? Why do you feel that way?

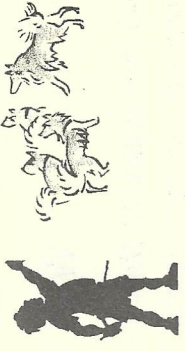


(Explain that we should not judge or trust because of a person's appearance. We trust someone because they have proven themselves to us.)

Trustworthiness is a very important part of having good character. We all want "the other guy" to be that way with us. Look to your left and then to your right. We are all "the other guy"!

Your Character Really Does Count!

Do you remember the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf!"?



There was once a young boy who, because he had nothing better to do, pretends that a wolf has come into the town where he lives. He begins screaming "Wolf!". The people in his town are very afraid the first time he does it. After he does it several times and the people see that there is no wolf, they know he is pretending and they stop paying attention to him. Then one day a wolf really does come into the town. The boy again begins screaming, "Wolf, wolf!". He tries to warn everyone, but they ignore him because they believe that he is not trustworthy! They don't believe that he is telling the truth!

(Ask participants)

1. *Is there any such thing as a little white lie? (No, lies do not have a color associated with them. If it is not true, it is a lie.)*
2. *What happens if you lie a lot? (Other people do not believe what you say anymore.)*
3. *Why do you think the people in the story stopped believing the boy when he shouted "Wolf!"? (He kept saying it when there was no wolf there.)*
4. *How can we make sure people believe what we say all the time? (Always tell the truth.)*
5. *Have you ever pretended to get attention? (sickness, couldn't do something, special need)*