

Please use this information in your meetings, newsletters, marquees, classrooms and at home! Feel free to call Carole Cotner, 498-5527, with ideas for community support of cooperation.

Character Trait for February is Honesty

There is no more fundamental ethical value than honesty. We associate honesty with people of honor, and we admire and trust those who are honest. But honesty is a broader concept than many may realize.

Honesty in communications requires a good-faith intent to convey the truth as best we know it and to avoid communicating in a way likely to mislead or deceive. There are three dimensions:

Truthfulness--The obligation of truthfulness precludes intentional misrepresentation of fact (lying). Intent is the crucial distinction between truthfulness and truth itself. Being wrong is not the same thing as being a liar, although honest mistakes can still damage trust insofar as they may show sloppy judgment.

Sincerity/non-deception--The obligation of sincerity precludes all acts, including half-truths, out-of-context statements, and even silence that are intended to create beliefs or leave impressions that are untrue or misleading.

Candor--In relationships involving legitimate expectations of trust, honesty may also require candor, forthrightness and frankness, imposing the obligation to volunteer information that another person needs to know.

Honesty in conduct prohibits stealing, cheating, fraud, subterfuge and other trickery. Cheating is a particularly foul form of dishonesty because one not only seeks to deceive but to take advantage of those who are not cheating. It's a violation of trust and fairness.

Not all lies are unethical, even though all lies are dishonest. Huh? That's right, honesty is not an inviolate principle. Occasionally dishonesty is ethically justifiable, as when the police lie in undercover operations or when one lies to criminals or terrorists to save lives. But don't kid yourself: occasions for ethically sanctioned lying are rare and require serving a very high purpose indeed; not hitting a management-pleasing sales target or winning a game or avoiding a confrontation. We're talking saving a life, that sort of thing.

Quotes for Honesty

"As scarce as truth is, the supply has always been in excess of the demand."
- Josh Billings (Henry Wheeler Shaw), 19th-century American humorist

"A promise made is a debt unpaid."
- Robert W. Service (in "The Cremation of Sam McGee," 1907)

"We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called on to perform what we cannot."
- Abraham Lincoln, 19th-century American president

"The truth is not always the same as the majority decision." - Pope John Paul II

"I have not observed men's honesty to increase with their riches." - Thomas Jefferson, 18th-century American Founding Father, early 19th-century U.S. president (letter to Jeremiah Moor, 1800)

***If you would like character education curricula or other materials
please contact Carole Cotner, Jersey Character Education Coordinators.***

Please use this information in your meetings, newsletters, marquees, classrooms and at home! Feel free to call Carole Cotner, 498-5527, with ideas for community support of cooperation.

"Honesty isn't a policy at all; it's a state of mind or it isn't honesty." - Eugene L'Hote

"Don't tell your friends their social faults; they will cure the fault and never forgive you."
- Logan Pearsall Smith

"Frankness invites frankness."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th-century American essayist, public philosopher and poet

"An overdose of praise is like 10 lumps of sugar in coffee; only a very few people can swallow it."
- Emily Post, 20th-century American etiquette advisor and author

"The pursuit of truth will set you free — even if you never catch up with it."

- Clarence Darrow, 20th-century American lawyer

"Advertising is the art of making whole lies out of half truths." - Edgar A. Shoaff

"Regardless of the moral issue, dishonesty in advertising has proved very unprofitable."

- Leo Burnett, 20th-century American advertising pioneer

"When all else fails, tell the truth."

- Donald T. Regan, 20th-century American business executive, Treasury Secretary, chief of staff for President Ronald Reagan

"A lie has speed, but truth has endurance." - Edgar J. Mohn

"If you add to the truth, you subtract from it." - The Talmud

"What you don't see with your eyes, don't witness with your mouth." - Jewish proverb

"Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't goin' away." - Elvis Presley

"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie — deliberate, contrived, and dishonest — but the myth — persistent, persuasive and realistic." - John F. Kennedy, 20th-century American president (from the Yale Commencement address, 1962)

"A belief is not true because it is useful." - Henri Amiel

"The house of delusions is cheap to build but drafty to live in." - A.E. Housman

"When somebody lies, somebody loses." - Stephanie Ericsson

"Flattery makes friends, truth enemies." - Spanish proverb

"Lying can never save us from another lie." - Vaclav Havel, 20th-century Czech poet and political activist, first president of post-Communist Republic

"We have to live today by what truth we can get today and be ready to call it falsehood tomorrow."
William James, 19th-century American philosopher and author

"An honest man's the noblest work of God." - Alexander Pope

***If you would like character education curricula or other materials
please contact Carole Cotner, Jersey Character Education Coordinators.***

Please use this information in your meetings, newsletters, marquees, classrooms and at home! Feel free to call Carole Cotner, 498-5527, with ideas for community support of cooperation.

“Always do right - this will gratify some and astonish the rest.” - Mark Twain

“I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man.” - George Washington

“The highest compact we can make with our fellow is - Let there be truth between us two forevermore.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

“It takes two to lie. - One to lie and one to listen.”
- Homer Simpson, from the television show The Simpsons

“No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar.” - Abraham Lincoln

***If you would like character education curricula or other materials
please contact Carole Cotner, Jersey Character Education Coordinators.***