

## Helping Children refrain from Lying

The duty of every parent and educator of children is to instill good habits and virtues in a child as well as teach the child to stay away from all evil. Piety and righteousness have two aspects:

- a) Obeying the orders of Allah and performing all that He has told us to do. The second stage of this is to perform that which He has recommended us to do.
- b) Staying away from all that is forbidden by Allah, and that which would cause His displeasure and anger. The second stage of this is to stay away from all that he dislikes, but has not forbidden.

According to scholars, those who aspire to piety, or who hope to teach their children about piety, should give greater emphasis to the second aspect. If a person stays away from haram and evil, the good deeds he performs even if few, will be accepted. As Allah says in the Qur'an: *Allah only accepts from those who guard (against evil).* (5:27)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) explains this beautifully in a hadith: *Try hard and struggle (in the path of Allah), and if you cannot perform much, then do not disobey Allah. For whoever builds and does not destroy, it is possible that his building will rise, even if slowly. But whoever builds and destroys, it is doubtful his building will ever rise.*

Thus sins prevent the rising of the human being. Good deeds accompanied by sins and evil serve little purpose.

Parents and religious educators must strive to teach children to stay away from all that is forbidden. A child who is taught the importance of Salaat and other wajib acts and is told to do good and please Allah, must also be trained to stay away from vices and wrong that are commonly present among children. It is wrong to be lenient with behaviors such as lying, cheating, talking evil of others etc. Action must be taken to prevent these qualities from becoming established in the child's character.

## The Evils of Lying

Lying is one of the greatest evils, and a major sin. All nations and communities who have principles and morals despise a liar. The enormity of the sin of lying can be seen in the following Ahadith:

*All evil was put in a house and the key to that house is lying.* Holy Prophet(s)

*The worst of faults in the eyes of Allah is a tongue that constantly lies.*

Holy Prophet (s)

*When a person lies, the angel moves away from him due to the offensive smell that comes with it.* Holy Prophet (s)

People resort to lying to avoid trouble, escape blame and censure, gain something or even just to fool others. If undetected the liar can feel he has triumphed over others. What he fails to understand is that he has lost something of great value; namely his integrity and his moral status in the eyes of Allah. A liar has no respect for Allah, nor for himself. Otherwise he would not stoop to the low

act of lying. Lying shows a total lack of conscience and fear of Allah. When the guilt at lying disappears, it is easy to continue lying throughout life. This lack of conscience also produces an inclination towards other sins, hence the description of lying as the key to the house of evil.

## Ways to prevent your child from lying

Children who lie at home may gradually become habitual liars. It is necessary to stop this evil habit right from the start. The following are some ways in which parents and others can discourage the habit of lying in children.

**Be an Example** The parent and educator must be careful that he or she does not lie. Sometimes adults lie to calm down a child, bribe him with false promises etc. The child learns that it is all right to lie to get a desired result.

The Holy Prophet (s) was very particular about this issue. Abdullah bin Aamir reports that one day the Prophet (s) came to his home. While the Prophet (s) was talking with his father, Abdulla's mother called out to him and said: "Come here so I can give you something". The Holy Prophet (s) asked: "What do you want to give him"? "I want to give him some dates", replied the mother. The Prophet (s) was pleased and said: "Had you not intended to give him something, Allah would write down a lie for you".

**Teach and Discuss about Lying** Tell your child often that it is wrong to lie.

Parents sometimes have the mistaken assumption that a child knows what is wrong and right, and will follow up on that. Although it is wrong to nag, adults must use opportunities to remind their children about the evils of lying.

Telling stories of truth and honesty, narrating Ahadith on the enormity of lying, etc. all have effect. This is especially true when the children are young. It is harder to influence children when they have reached a certain age of maturity.

The following story is a good example of a mother's influence on preventing a lie. Abdul Qadir Gilani, reports: From the early stages of life I was determined not to lie. Once I was traveling to Baghdad from Makkah. My mother gave me forty dinars for the journey, and made me promise that I would never lie. On the way to Makkah we were attacked by robbers. One of them came to me and asked me how much money I had. I told him I had forty dinars. He did not believe me and left. Another robber came to me asked me the same thing. I gave the same reply. The robber took me to his chief and narrated to him what I had said. The chief looked at me in surprise and asked me why I had revealed the truth. "I had promised my mother I would always tell the truth", I said "I did not want to break my promise".

The man was astounded. He thought for a while and said, "Woe be to me! You are so careful not to break a pledge to your mother, while I have broken my pledge to my God, and am heedless about it". The chief of the robbers repented and vowed to stop thieving. Along with him his band of robbers repented too.

Always associate lying and liars with lowliness and meanness Noble and upright people stay away from lying. It is important to make a child aspire to achieve nobility of character. When a liar is viewed as one who has no dignity, who risks his reputation in the eyes of people and has lost it in the eyes of God, the

child will be less willing to begin the evil habit of lying. The following are some Ahadith which could be taught to the child:

*One who lies often, has no respect.* Holy Prophet (s)

*The most evil of all manners is lying.* Imam Ali (a)

*A wise man never lies, even if he desires to do so.* Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (a)

Remind the child that everyone loves an honest person who can be relied upon and trusted in all matters.

Even a small lie, or a rare lie, could tarnish that reputation forever.

Look for Causes. If a child lies, parents must look into the reasons behind the lie. Anybody who lies does so for a reason - either to achieve something or to avoid something. Once parents know the cause of the lie, they can take steps to prevent it from happening again. For example, if fear of punishment leads a child to lie about something, the parents should review their methods of discipline and see if they are too severe. They should talk it over with the child, and help him understand that discipline is necessary for growth of character and is not something to be feared.

Deal gently with the child. Harsh behavior from parents, or unreasonable expectations sometimes lead a child to lying. Parents should be careful to consider the age and capabilities of a child before reacting to something they do not like. They should also try as much as possible to talk to the child constantly, assure him of their love through various ways, and allow him to feel confident of himself and his abilities.

All this will help the child avoid lying.