

What is your Parenting IQ? (Integrity Quotient)



By Judy Arnall

We were on holidays with a rented van. As my husband signed the papers to acquire the van, the skies opened up and it started pouring rain. The rental clerk decided to forego the pre-customer condition check and wrote on the form that it was raining hard and the customer didn't inspect the car. We occupied ourselves by shoving kids and bags in the van to escape the belting rain. All was well until halfway through the vacation, another man swung open his car door at a petrol station and banged our van door with his car door, hard enough to make a scrape the size of a quarter. When my husband turned in the van at the airport, I asked him if the rental clerk noticed the dent. My husband said that he did and my husband admitted doing it. "What? Why?" I retorted with surprise. There was no way the van rental company could prove we did it, especially with no pre-rental inspection report. My husband replied, "Yes, there was no proof, but we were responsible for it, and I would feel better admitting it, rather than lying about it." During the plane ride home, I was a bit angry about his response but could gradually see the point in his argument. It didn't matter what other people knew or thought. He needed to do the right thing, for his own sense of self-respect and integrity.

Integrity is about doing the right thing when it's not always convenient, cheap, or easy to do so, and even when no one is looking or there is no way to get caught.

It's about whether one can face them selves in the mirror and feel good about their actions. It's about being honest and integral to the self-image of who one is.

Parents want their children to have honesty and integrity, but they don't always model themselves. When children see their parents preaching honesty, yet acting in ways that aren't honest, they may lose respect for them as role models and often see them as hypocrites. And even worse, children copy the actions they see their parents do. They often don't have a clue that their behaviour is dishonest or irresponsible.

Most of us are law abiding, good citizens. But there are times, we have to admit, when the area is a bit gray in the integrity department!

What is your parenting Integrity Quotient? Take this simple test:

1. Do I try to always be truthful? Do I tell the person answering the phone and door, to tell the caller that I'm not home, when I really am?
2. Do I honor my commitments to people, and organizations, even when it's inconvenient or costly to do so?
3. Do I honor my children's real ages, when entering facilities, or do I lie about their ages to get a discount? Do I bring their friends in the facilities at the "family rate" or do I tell the cashier that they are separate from family?
4. Do I obey signs in parks, zoos, playgrounds and fields, or do I ignore them? Do I expect my children to obey the law when they are not with me, if I disregard laws while out with my children?
5. Do I honor "no outside food" rules at the movie theatre concert halls and indoor playgrounds? Or do I sneak food in order to save money and time?
6. Do I copy CDs, movies, and games for myself, my children, friends, or my child's friends without getting permission from the author/publishers?
7. Do I buy items at the store, fully intending to use them, and return them for a full refund when no longer needed?
8. Do I take more than my share when stores and organizations are giving items away for free?
9. Do I use business expenses and income tax deductions ethically, or do I stretch the meaning and intent of the privilege, to benefit my family and friends?
10. Do I point out to cashiers when they give me incorrect change in my favour?
11. Do I break the law by doubling up two children using one seat belt, putting both in danger of injury?
12. If I say that I'm going to do something, do I honor my word?

Your children's eyes are watching you. Be the person you want them to be; honest, responsible, law-abiding, and good citizens. And above all, you want

them to feel good about themselves. It's not about beating a big corporation, or getting your due worth from "the system" or even getting something for free. It's about honorable parenting. Because ultimately, the costs incurred by dishonesty, and irresponsibility is passed on to the consumer: that's you and me and our children.

In the end, the scrape on the van door cost us an extra \$73, a small price to pay for my husband's self respect. But the lesson taught to our children was priceless.

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