

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #28: Integrity

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they act on their convictions and stand up for their beliefs.

68%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Integrity" is one of six positive-values assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

Acting on Beliefs Means Taking Risks

Fifteen-year-old Ellen Bigger of Key Largo, Florida, had every reason to have strong beliefs—and not act on them.

At the age of 5, she and a group of her kindergarten classmates got caught in cross fire between a sniper high on drugs and a police SWAT team. At age 10, someone high on drugs killed her Girl Scout leader. Ellen quickly learned that drugs were harmful. She could have lived in fear and cynicism as many of the people in her community did.

But Ellen didn't want to live like that. She wanted to live what she believed—that she could make a difference. So she started a program called "Drug-Free Homes." She printed up a brochure explaining the program and telling the danger of drugs. On the back of the brochure, she printed a pledge



for people to sign. She then started asking people to sign up. When they did, she gave them a sticker to place on their front door or window that said: "This Is a Drug-Free Home. Every Member within Has Signed a Pledge to Live a Drug-Free Life."

Not only is Ellen an example of integrity, so is the impact of her program. "If people in the community see that even one family has a sticker up, they have the courage to sign the pledge and post a sticker on their own homes," she says. While it may sometimes be hard for young people to stand up for their convictions, Ellen Bigger shows what can happen when young people act on what they believe.

Integrity Rating

As a family, have each member rate the integrity of the people listed below with either a high or low mark and explain why.

	HIGH	LOW
The president or the prime minister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your family doctor(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your teacher(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your heroes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your religious leader(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your next-door neighbor(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your community leader(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your extended family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Admit It

Tell your child about a time when you stood up for something even though it was difficult to do. Explain how you felt. Then share a time when you didn't stand up for something because you were afraid. Discuss why it's easier to act on your convictions in some situations than others.

time together

Three ways to help your child build integrity:

1. Learn to talk to your child about difficult issues such as domestic violence, oppression, and prejudice. Help your child understand how these issues relate to her or his integrity.
2. Celebrate when your child acts on a belief or conviction when it was obviously difficult to do. Standing up for a belief may convince others to believe in it, too.
3. Share with your child the times when you feel tempted to ignore your values and beliefs.

Quick Tip:
Integrity builds
over a lifetime.

3 Steps of Integrity

“One cannot have integrity without also displaying a measure of honesty,” says Stephen L. Carter in his book *Integrity*. Yet, he contends that integrity is more difficult than just being honest. Carter’s three steps of integrity are:

1. Take time to discern right from wrong. What do you believe? What do you value?
2. Get involved in what you believe and value. Do something about it.
3. Admit publicly what you believe and value while acting on what you say.

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- What does integrity mean to our family?
- When is it easy to act on your beliefs? When is it difficult? Why?
- What happened the last time you stood up for or spoke out about what you value?

More Help for Parents

Integrity by Stephen L. Carter. This book gives an in-depth look at the subject of integrity and why it is an important value. (Published by HarperCollins.)

Final Word

“Kids know, better than grownups, what we do is more important than what we say.”

—Pete Seeger

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