

# **SUSPENSION LEARNING PACKET #5:**

## *DISHONESTY*

### *INTRODUCTION*

This is a Suspension Learning Packet. It consists of several pages of text and a Response sheet. Your assignment is to read the text and answer the questions on the Response sheet. The text includes three stories about students who broke a school rule. The Response sheet asks questions about what the people in the stories did that got them into trouble. Reading the text and answering the questions on the Response sheet will help you understand what you have done wrong and how to avoid doing it again. Read the text first and try to remember what you've read. Then read the Response Sheet and write answers to the questions.

### *WHAT YOU DID*

You have been suspended because you were dishonest in some way. Maybe you took something that did not belong to you. Possibly you told a lie. Maybe you cheated on homework or on a test.

Whatever form your behavior took, you need to look at the reasons behind it. The rest of this packet will help you do just that.

### *WHAT'S WRONG WITH DISHONESTY*

We all have heard the old saying "Honesty is the best policy." In fact, you may have heard it so many times that you've begun NOT to hear it--or worse, you don't pay attention to it. You may connect it with the time-worn expressions you seem always to hear from parents and teachers and other authority figures in your life.

Sometimes, what you see in real-life situations is the opposite from that old saying. Honesty doesn't seem always to be the best policy. People get by with shoplifting expensive clothes, shoes, tapes and CDs from the local mall. Other

people cheat on homework and make high grades. Others lie about who did something ("I didn't do it; it was George!") and seem to get by with the lie.

You may look at all these situations and think that the people involved are "getting away with something." They seem not to get caught, so why shouldn't you do the same things?

Let's think about honesty in a bigger context. Take the person who shoplifts an expensive pair of athletic shoes, for example. Let's say he or she doesn't get caught. He/she walks right out of the store and for some reason, no one sees him or her and the automatic sensors don't work. Now the person has a really cool pair of athletic shoes and no one gets hurt, right?

Wrong. Somebody pays for those shoes. Somebody always pays. But in this case it's not the person who shoplifted. It's probably the salesperson on duty that day, who will catch the error at the end of the day, or the next inventory period. That person or the store manager will pay. And the theft and its effects get passed on up the line.

Top management reviews the number of items taken from the store and raises the store's prices even higher to pay for what was stolen. The price increase is passed on to you and your friends and parents--the honest consumers who go in the store with cash or credit cards, ready to pay for purchases. You pay eight or ten or twelve percent more as a result of all those people who stole from the store, thinking that nobody would have to pay for it.

In a sense, the shoplifter was right. He or she didn't have to pay. But somebody did pay-- in fact, a number of "somebodies" paid: the salesperson, the store manager, the paying customers. You and your friends and family paid for that single person's dishonesty.

Look at another example. Let's say your math class has a test. It's on a difficult lesson and no one in the class understands it very well. One student--let's call him Joe--goes to the restroom and looks up the answers during the test. He makes a 95 on the test. The next highest grade is in the 70s. The grading curve is thrown off by the one high score, which Joe got dishonestly. He didn't really understand the material--no one did--but the teacher concludes that the rest of

the class is just lazy. She doesn't schedule a review; she goes on to the next lesson. Everyone's course grade suffers because of Joe's dishonesty. Sure, Joe "got by with it" in the short term. But in the long term, everyone paid for Joe's cheating on the test.

We all know that being honest, fair and truthful is the best way to deal with people. We know this partly because that's the way we ourselves want to be treated by others. We expect our parents to treat us fairly and not take away privileges without a good reason. We expect our teachers to grade us fairly and to treat us as well as other students. We expect our friends to tell us the truth and to respect our possessions. Yet we often don't demand the same standards from ourselves.

Think about times when you were the victim of someone's dishonest behavior. Maybe you left a purse or wallet somewhere and came back only minutes later to discover all the cash and identification cards missing. Maybe you went to your locker and found that a favorite jacket or sweater was missing. Maybe you found that your best friend lied to you about where he or she was going in order not to include you in the activity. Maybe your parents mistakenly grounded you for something your brother or sister did. Maybe your teacher accused you of misbehaving when you didn't.

All of these situations sound unfair, don't they? You probably find yourself feeling angry as you read them--especially if any of the situations really have happened to you. Dishonest behavior makes people angry because they don't feel that they deserve it. They feel as if they have been treated unfairly.

So: what about your dishonesty? Wasn't your dishonest behavior unfair to someone else? Didn't you hurt someone else or make someone else angry by the way you acted?

Just as important, didn't you hurt yourself? Lying, cheating, and stealing hurt the person who engages in the dishonest behavior too. But you were lucky. You got caught. You didn't "get away with it." Now you have a chance to face your dishonesty and deal with the consequences of a bad decision that you made.

## ***THREE STORIES ABOUT DISHONESTY***

### **SEAN STEALS SOME SHOES**

Sean is thirteen and comes from a middle-class family. His mother and father both work hard and try to give him what he needs. Sean has all the clothes, tapes, shoes and other things he needs. They aren't always the best or most expensive brands, but they are all of good quality. He has a 10-speed bike--not the most expensive, but a good bike.

Sean lives with his parents near a very exclusive suburb. Many of the families have expensive cars and large homes. The nearby mall has very exclusive shops with expensive merchandise. Many of Sean's friends have more things than he. They seem to be able to buy anything they want. Sean sees this and wishes he could be like them. He wishes he could have what they have.

After school and on weekends, Sean and his friends go to the mall. They hang out or go to an arcade where they play video games. Although Sean's friends come from well-to-do families, they often don't carry much pocket money. If they want a box of cookies or a can of pop, they'll often take it without paying. They think nothing of it; it's "just part of growing up," they say.

One Saturday afternoon, Sean and two of his friends were window-shopping in the mall. Sean saw a really expensive pair of athletic shoes that he wanted. They were just like the ones that Jack had worn to class last week--the ones everyone thought were so cool.

"I really like those shoes but they cost too much. My mom would never let me buy them," Sean said to his friend Mike.

"So take them! You don't need money! Just run real fast and grab them. There's no sensor on them--see! Do it! I dare you!"

That was all Sean needed. He didn't want the other guys to think he was afraid. Before he knew it, he was running out the door of the shoe store,

across the parking lot where his friends were waiting for him. The new shoes were under his jacket. The sensors hadn't gone off! He had made it! He didn't get caught! Sean felt like a hero at first. His friends were impressed by what he had done. And the new shoes were really cool.

But when Sean got home, he didn't feel right. He couldn't show his mother or sister the shoes. He had to hide them in his room. Worse still, one of the salespeople in the store knew Mike's older brother. His mother was on the phone, saying in a worried tone of voice: "He's never done anything like this before..."

## **CARRIE CHEATS HER WAY OUT OF CHEERLEADING**

Carrie is in the seventh grade this year. She is pretty and energetic and has a lot of friends. But that isn't enough for Carrie. Carrie wants to be a cheerleader.

There are several requirements for being a cheerleader. She has to have a B average. She also has to be a member of at least two other school activities.

Carrie's other activities take up a great deal of time. She also has a very active social life and goes to many parties. She volunteers for lots of school projects. As a result, her average is dropping and her homework isn't getting done.

Two of Carrie's friends, Stephanie and Sarah, are both very good students. They feel sorry for Carrie ("she's so overworked and stressed out, poor thing!"), so they help her with her homework. Sometimes Stephanie even does the assignments for her on her dad's computer. Carrie writes her name on the work and turns it in.

But Stephanie and Sarah are getting tired of this arrangement. Last week, Stephanie was working on a big project of her own. "I don't have time to help you, Carrie," she said. "Besides, Dad needs to use the computer this weekend. You'll have to do your own work--for a change!"

Carrie doesn't know what to do. It's the weekend of the cheerleading tryouts and she is facing a quiz on Friday. She finally talks Sarah into typing the assignment on her typewriter.

Carrie looks at the questions and her mind goes blank. She doesn't know a single one of them! In a panic, she reaches for Stephanie's paper. Steffi is a good student; she'll know the answers!

Stephanie sees the teacher looking at her and panics. She slaps Carrie's hand away from the page and turns her paper over. "Don't look at my answers!" she cries. "Do your own work and leave me alone! If you weren't so wrapped up in all the cheerleader stuff, you'd have time to study too!"

Carrie and Stephanie are called into the teacher's office. The teacher looked at Carrie's folder. "What's wrong, Carrie?" Ms. Thompson asked. "You turned in all the assignments. Most of the test questions were on the daily assignments. Didn't you remember any of them?"

Carrie looked up at the teacher. She couldn't think of a thing to say.

## **BILL TAKES THE BLAME**

Bill and Tom are best friends. They hang out together. They take the same classes and see the same people. They are in the same activities and clubs. Tom really likes Jeff's new jacket. It's a great color and is the latest style. Tom knows he would look even better than Jeff in the jacket.

Tom has started taking things that don't belong to him--little things like ballpoint pens or notebooks or key rings--from drugstores or supermarkets. Once or twice, he has stolen tapes from a video store. Once he smuggled a book out of the local library. "Why not?" he tells Bill when Bill tries to talk him out of it. "Nobody cares. Besides these stores are so big and make so much money, they owe it to us!"

Tom has decided to take Jeff's jacket. He's commented to Bill several times that he liked the coat. However, he hasn't yet told Bill what he

intends to do. He doesn't want to get caught. So he figures he'll have to make it look as if someone else did it. That "someone" will have to be Bill. He'd be the logical suspect, since he has the locker right next to Jeff.

Besides, Tom knows Bill's locker combination--he memorized it one day when he was watching. He also found out Jeff's combination. He plans to take the jacket, hide it in Bill's locker on a Friday when Bill leaves early for a dentist's appointment and then take it home on Saturday when the building is open and no one is around.

Tom's plan goes off like clockwork. He watches to see when Jeff wears the jacket, takes it out of the locker during a late Friday afternoon assembly, hides it in Bill's locker and goes back to assembly. It's late Friday afternoon. He plans to come back and get the jacket next morning.

But the plan goes wrong. Jeff also needed to go home early that day so he went to his locker before his last class. When Jeff sees that his jacket is gone, he notifies the principal's office. The principal then asks Jeff if anyone knows his combination. Jeff gives the principal the names of three students, one of whom was Bill.

Ten minutes into the search, the jacket is found. Tom comes to school on Saturday and finds the jacket missing. He can't figure out what went wrong. Bill is called into the office on Monday. "What's your explanation for this?" the principal asks angrily as he holds up Jeff's jacket.

Bill stares at the jacket and tries to figure out how the jacket got there. He remembers how Tom talked about liking that jacket of Jeff's. . .

## ***REASONS FOR DISHONESTY***

Robert Fulghum, a former teacher and author of the adult book, *ALL I REALLY NEEDED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN*, notes that the most important lessons we learn in life are learned by the time we are five years old. These rules include, among others, playing fair, not hitting others, and not taking things that belong to others. Whether we are five or

thirteen or twenty-five, none of us likes to be cheated, stolen from, lied to, or taken advantage of by other people.

As we get older and get involved with a variety of people, we often forget the wisdom of those things we learned in kindergarten. We forget to act with simple decency and fairness toward others. When we forget those very important lessons, we need someone or something to remind us of the rules.

Your school is a very important place to learn. You learn math, science, history, English and other subjects, but you also learn lessons about life. You learn to live with others and respect their rights. You learn to be a part of a community. You learn that how you behave today can influence your decisions and actions forever.

Developing a pattern of dishonest behavior--whether it's lying, cheating, stealing or shoplifting--can influence the way you live the rest of your life. It also influences the way others see you.

For example, if a teacher or principal writes in your school record that you were given a detention for cheating on a test or for taking someone else's property, whoever reads the comments later on may be suspicious of you. Other students will be careful with their test papers or personal belongings when you're around. They'll always be on guard and uncomfortable around you.

Once you've established this way of behaving, you may find yourself believing it. You may feel that you have to live up to your bad reputation.

Stop the cycle now! Don't make dishonesty a part of your life! Making the right choices can make you feel good about yourself and help others to respect you!

## ***CONSEQUENCES OF DISHONESTY***

When you act in a dishonest manner, you pay a price. You lose the trust and respect of people around you. Once you have cheated, lied or stolen, the person affected--and possibly others as well--will have a hard time trusting you. "He



did it once, maybe he'll do it again," they may say. Or: "You can't trust her--she never tells the truth, even to her friends." You may develop a reputation as someone to be avoided. Few people want to be friends with a person who is not trustworthy.

People aren't the only ones who have problems with dishonesty. Stores have to hire extra security personnel to take care of people who shoplift or steal. In schools where students are dishonest, teachers and administrators have to be constantly aware of potential thefts. They have to question someone loitering near others' lockers or someone who hangs out in the hallway.

As a result, students can't make learning their priority. Students are worried about their safety or the security of their possessions. Everyone's attention is focused on something besides learning.

### ***HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WITHOUT BEING DISHONEST***

What are some alternatives to dishonest behavior? To discover them, you first need to understand why you are dishonest. Then try to think of some alternatives for yourself.

Below are three statements which cover most types of dishonest behavior. Read each one carefully. Do any (or all) apply to you? Below each statement is an alternative action that you should consider. Read it carefully too; then use it in the "goal-setting" portion of the response packet that follows:

1. I cheat in school.

ALTERNATIVE: In the future, I will try to do my homework and study for tests. It is not worth the stress to depend on someone else for answers. Other people don't know all the answers anyway! I need to learn to rely on myself and my own knowledge. It is more important for me to learn, even if it involves making mistakes, because I can learn from my mistakes too.

2. I take things that don't belong to me. I steal from other people and/or shoplift from stores.

ALTERNATIVE: I will not take things that don't belong to me. Other people (and institutions) are entitled to keep what belongs to them. Nothing is worth the price of getting caught. Material things can't make me healthy, intelligent or happy. I need to figure out what is missing from my life. The "things" that I take are only filling an emotional gap. They represent something else--self-esteem, respect, love--that I must not be getting in my life.

3. I lie to other people.

ALTERNATIVE: I will try not to change the truth when I talk to other people, even if I think that I am protecting myself. I will admit it when I've done something wrong. It is difficult to constantly have to cover up lies I've already told. I'm tired of having to justify what I say to people and try to make my stories consistent. In the future, I'll tell the truth.

Each time you're tempted to go back to your old dishonest behavior, look at the three alternatives above. See if you can discover some other way of handling the situation. For example, if you see something in a store that you really want but can't afford, talk with the salesperson.

Maybe he or she will arrange to put it on layaway and work out a payment plan with you. Maybe you can borrow the money from someone in your family and pay him or her back over a period of time. Maybe you can earn the money by babysitting or doing odd jobs in the neighborhood. Maybe the store plans to put the item on sale soon and will call you when the price is reduced. It's fun to think of creative--and honest--solutions to your problems!

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 5.1

## *DISHONESTY*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

Agree or disagree with statements 1 through 10. Give reasons why you agree or disagree:

1. I sometimes feel guilty if I tell a lie to a good friend.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. It's OK to cheat on daily homework assignments as long as you don't cheat on tests.

3. It doesn't bother me when other people lie to me.
  
4. Cheating at cards or games is OK as long as no money is involved.
  
5. It's OK to take small items like lipsticks, earrings, baseball cards, key rings, tapes or CDs from a store. The store makes so much money that no one cares if you don't pay for these things.
  
6. When you want something badly enough and you can't afford it, it's OK to take it as long as you don't do it very often and only for things you REALLY want.
  
7. There's nothing wrong with lying, cheating or stealing as long as no one gets hurt.
  
8. It's OK to take things from stores as long as you never take things from friends.
  
9. Some of my close friends do dishonest things all the time.

10. Teachers don't mind it if students cheat once in a while--in fact, they expect it. If they don't catch it, they're to blame, not the students.
  
11. Now look back at the story of Sean and his shoes. Why do you think Sean took the shoes from the store? Was it because he wanted the shoes so much or because of his friend's dare? Or both?
  
12. Write an ending for the story. What do you think Sean's mother said to him when she hung up? What did Sean say to his mother? What happened the next day?
  
13. How else could Sean have gotten the shoes without stealing them? Give as many different answers as you can.
  
14. How might Sean's friends have reacted if he had refused to steal the shoes?



# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 5.2

## *DISHONESTY*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. Look back at the story of Carrie and her cheating. Write an ending to this story.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Was it OK for Carrie to get Stephanie and Sarah to do her homework for her as long as they agreed? Why or why not?

3. Were Stephanie and Sarah to blame in any way for Carrie's dishonesty? Were they being dishonest too, or were they just helping out a friend? Explain your answers.
  
4. Why did Stephanie decide to quit helping Carrie? Was she right to stop? Why or why not?
  
5. Was it all right for Carrie to cheat because her cheerleading requirements and tryouts took so much of her time? Why or why not?
  
6. Were there other alternatives that Carrie might have tried to help her get through this busy period? What are some of them?
  
7. Now look back at the story of Tom taking Jeff's jacket. Write an ending to this story.
  
8. Why did Tom try to shift the blame to Bill?



9. Was it worse for Tom to steal the jacket or to set up Bill to take the blame if the theft went wrong? Explain your answer.
  
10. Imagine that you are a school counselor and have to arrange a counseling session with Tom. What would you say to him? What alternatives would you suggest to him for the future?
  
11. Would you want to be friends with Tom? With Bill? Why or why not?
  
12. Why do teens sometimes take articles of clothing from other people or from stores? What kinds of things are most often taken?
  
13. Is it more or less wrong to steal from an individual person than from a large store? Explain.
  
14. Here are some words which are all related to honesty and dishonesty in some way. The words are: lie, sincere, genuine, false, true, good, cheat, fair, steal, tricky, integrity, dependable, untrustworthy, upright, unscrupulous, earn, evasive, open, shoplift, sneak. (You may need a dictionary to do this question).

On the next page, there are two headings: HONESTY and DISHONESTY. Write the words in the list under what you think are the right headings.

HONESTY

DISHONESTY

15. Now rank all the words under each heading from "1" for most important, or best, to "5," least important or worst.
  
16. What kind of thoughts cause you to be dishonest? Suggest several ways that you can keep yourself from thinking these thoughts.
  
17. How does a person earn a reputation for being dishonest?
  
18. Write two goals that will help you to be a more honest person.

