



Children's Center

Bridgewater State College

March 2009

The Truth About Children's Lies

by Nancy Clark, director

Few things confound us more than the lies children tell. When the truth is obvious, a lie may feel like an insult to our intelligence, or leave us questioning the trust we thought we had developed with the child. If we react while feeling angry or resentful, however, we may never find out *why* s/he lied. The reason for a preschooler's lie is often much more important than the lie itself. Handled properly, a lie can be the basis of a character enhancing experience.

Why do they do it?

Young children often lie because they are afraid, ashamed, or insecure. In his book, Between Parent and Child, Dr. Haim Ginott warns that some children lie because they are not allowed to tell the truth. If they are punished for being honest about their actions or feelings, children lie in self-defense. A. S. Neill wrote in Summerhill,

If your child lies, either he is afraid of you or he is copying you. Lying parents will have lying children.

If you want the truth from your child, do not lie to him.

He goes on to write about the difficulty adults face in telling children the truth, acknowledging that few people are equipped to be totally honest. Most adults lie at times, often to avoid hurting someone else's feelings or to cover up our own. We model this behavior regularly for children.

In our society we seem to have concluded that it is dangerous to tell the truth about our emotions, perhaps because we fear that if they are expressed they will become stronger, but if we ignore them or deny their presence, they will go away. Almost from birth adults tell children, "Don't cry. Be brave," when being afraid and crying are honest responses to injury. If children learn to disguise their true emotions, they also learn to be dishonest about other things.

Sometimes children lie to give themselves in fantasy what they lack in reality. Peer admiration, adult affection and approval, and the need to belong are all driving forces in a preschooler's life. If the facts do not support a place of importance, the child may make up a tall tale to fill the gap.

Dr. Paul Ackerman and Dr. Murray Kappelman, authors of Signals: What Your Child is Really Telling You, suggest that another common cause of childhood lying is the exploration of the unknown. Young children lie to discover the other side of the truth, to test the limits and see what lying is all about. Are the rules really firm? What will happen to me if I break them? What would it feel like to actually tell a lie? Ackerman and Kappelman see

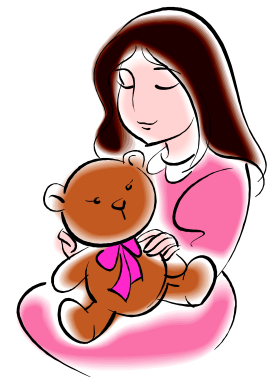
the "exploratory" lie as the child's first hesitant step towards independence and a normal stage of child development.

What is the best response to a lie?

Probably the only harmless response to lying is curiosity. Often young children's lies reveal the very things they intend to conceal. If our goal is to help children learn from their lies, then we must try to find out the motivation for lying by asking ourselves questions such as:

- ◆ What does the child hope to achieve or to avoid?
- ◆ Does s/he fear punishment, disapproval, or rejection?
- ◆ How can we best help him/her to overcome the reason for the lie?
- ◆ How can I use the information gained from this lie to help him/her distinguish between reality and wishful thinking?

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Self-portrait
by
Marissa

Dates to Remember

March 9 - 13
Spring Break
(no college classes)

March 12 - Thursday
Children in the Shadow
parent workshop

March 16 - 20
Speech and Language Screenings

March 20 - Friday
Pajama Day (see page 4 for details)

Curriculum Notes - Investigator Group

by Elise McHugh, teacher



Happy Birthday:

Gavin

March 22

At the beginning of the month we finished our unit on *Winter*. The children participated in many art activities, including decorating mittens, painting with Epsom salt, and using Puffy Paint (equal parts shaving cream and Elmer's glue). For activities relating to the theme, they sorted winter clothing and predicted whether ice would melt faster with or without salt sprinkled on top.

Next we began our *Healthy Foods/Healthy Bodies* unit. Several children had expressed interest in how our bodies work. The science center was filled with interactive materials for the children to explore, such as an arm with elastic "muscles" to demonstrate how muscles move and a large foam skeleton puzzle that was about as large as the children! There was a skeleton model for them to study and anatomy pictures hanging on the wall. The upstairs dramatic play area was transformed into a doctor's office. The children played many roles while using this area - doctor, patient, and office manager. They examined real x-rays and used play medical equipment. This type of play helps them to overcome any fears they may have about visiting the doctor.

During this unit, the teachers discussed many *healthy habits* with the children. We talked about the importance of visiting the doctor and the dentist, about healthy versus junk foods, and about proper hand washing techniques. Did you know that we should all wash our hands for as long as it takes to sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"? Two favorite books we read were *Those Mean Nasty Disgusting..But Invisible Germs* and *When You Were a Baby*.

Valentine's Day in our class was very low-key. The children shared Valentines if they wished, and we had a special snack of Belgian waffles with strawberries. Colleen Gallagher, Jennifer Coutu, and a group of college students from the Commuter Service Office provided materials and conducted a Valentine's craft activity that week.

Since the children were talking about dinosaurs, that became our next topic. We completed several art activities, including dinosaur rubbings and clay dinos. This topic lends itself to many *math and science activities*. We made fossil prints from toy dinos and play dough, and we excavated dinosaurs frozen in ice to experience the job of a paleontologist. For math, we graphed our favorite dinosaurs and used one-foot pieces of yarn to measure whether some dinos would fit into our classroom. A stegosaurus is 25 feet long, and Tyrannosaurus Rex is 40 feet long. Would they fit into your house?

On Tuesday, February 17th, Prof. Greg Nelson invited our class to a *Math Carnival* presented by his early childhood students. Each student created a game based on an early math concept. The children fished for numbers, excavated and sorted shapes, and rolled a die to move along a snake-shaped game board. Pictures

from the Carnival are posted near the Parent's White Board in the hallway. We are fortunate to be associated with the college, as this link affords us many *enrichment opportunities*, such as the Math Carnival and weekly music time. Professor Sarah McQuarrie from the music department *sings with the children* every Wednesday morning. She teaches them high and low sounds, seasonal and holiday songs, and interactive songs using stick puppets. The children benefit greatly from these college partnerships, and, in this time of ever-shrinking budgets, we are privileged to augment our program with these activities.

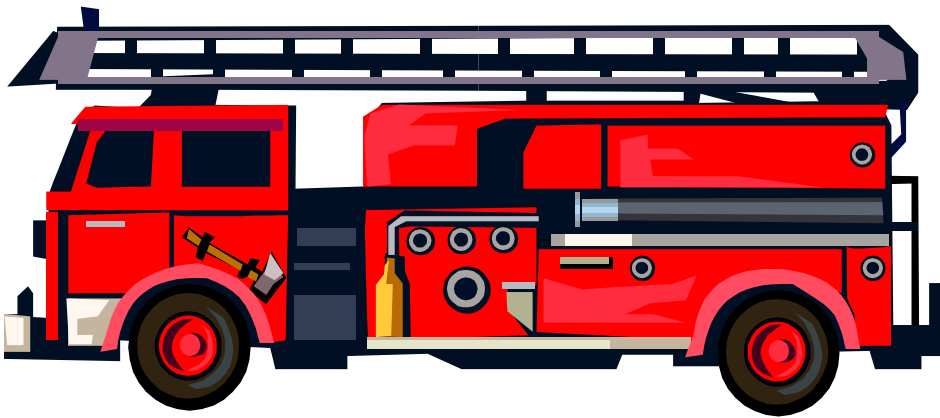
Next Up: During Spring Break week we will have one mixed classroom. The theme for this week will be "Anything Goes!" We hope to partner with *Project Wild* and present some new science activities.



Lending Library News: The library is very popular! We are glad to see so many families take advantage of this free and convenient resource. As President Obama stated, *you are your child's first and most important teacher*. Instilling your child with an interest in and a love for books will provide a strong basis for future learning. We have also added some magazines for adults to read. We hope you continue to take advantage and enjoy the library.

Curriculum Notes – Explorer Group

by L.Eileen Estudante, lead teacher



Happy Birthday:

Aidan	March 11
Jack & Kasey	March 14

The month of February is behind us now and we are entering the month of March and with it, celebrating the promise of spring. Toward the end of February, we had a few beautiful days that let us watch the snow as it began to melt on our playground and see some green sprouts from the chive plant in our garden! Please keep an eye on our group area bulletin board as we begin some “Spring Thinking!”

We celebrated friendship during our Valentine Party and the children took part in eating delicious strawberries and freshly whipped cream. We also enjoyed the company of volunteers from the Commuter Service Office during “Love Thy Neighbor” week. They brought in colorful materials for us and we created some beautiful valentines for our families. The first few weeks of February we became very interested in trains and that led us to explore other forms of transportation during our small groups. We learned about the many modes of travel available to us and how many people get from one place to another. We created maps, made airplanes, graphed our favorite ways of travel as

well as designed our own road signs! This discussion of transportation led the way to our next topic of interest – the people who work within our community.

We are very lucky to have parents that contribute to our community in significant and meaningful ways. Brian Parks (Madelyn’s dad) is one of the fantastic firefighters found in our community, and he was kind enough to come in on Thursday, February 26th to share with the children what he does in his job as a full time firefighter. He could not have had a more enraptured audience! The children were thrilled to see him dress in his firefighting suit complete with mask and air tank. Thank you, Brian, for coming in and sharing with the children your very important job! We also had an impromptu visit from one of our campus police officers as she was doing her rounds. Officer Diane Nicol-Tague was kind enough to say a few

words to the children and helped them by answering questions they had about her job. Thank you, Diane!

During the month of February you may have noticed a college student in our midst every morning. Yoko Kojima is a senior at BSC and has been working towards completing a 75 hour field experience for her class ECPK 491 Mentored Performance Fieldwork I, PreK-K. She has been a welcome addition to our classroom and the children and teachers will miss her once she completes her hours in March. We wish her continued success in teaching and a wonderful experience as she departs for her next practicum.

Up and coming....

The Children’s Center’s two groups will be combined from March 9 to 13. If you have enrolled your child during this optional week of the college’s spring break, s/he will have a wonderful experience reinforcing friendships with both Explorer and Investigator teachers and children. After the spring break, Professor Joanne L. Abdallah M.S., CCC-SLP and her senior level communication disorders students will be offering free speech and language screenings. Professor Abdallah is the clinic supervisor and instructor of the BSC Speech-Language-Hearing Center, which has just moved to their new location across from the main entrance to the Burnell School. Please check your parent mailbox for a permission form and further details about this valuable service.



The Truth About Children's Lies

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If we give children the chance to retrace their steps they often tell the truth. Only then are we able to help them overcome the need to lie and help them to accept themselves as they are.

Little good comes from "catching" children in a lie. If we are sensitive to the realities in children's lives we know that the last thing they need is an adult to further defeat them by denying their stories. "You are not...you could not...you do not..." are all insensitive replies to a lying child, and are apt to drive the truth underground. As Neill said, "the best way to make a child a liar for life is to insist that he speak the truth and nothing but the truth."

When an only child recently told me she had a baby sister, I acknowledged her desire by saying, "It would be fun to have a baby sister, wouldn't it? What would you do if you had one?" She described many activities she would do with a sibling, to which I responded, "You do many of those things with your friends here at school, don't you?" With this response I tried to help her distinguish between reality and wishful thinking. I also hoped to make her feel better about

her family situation and to keep the communication open between us.

If we want to teach honesty, then we must be prepared to listen to bitter truths as well as pleasant ones. Children learn whether or not honesty is the best policy from adults' reactions. We must create a safe environment in which children feel comfortable in expressing their true feelings. Contrary to popular belief, negative emotions that are recognized, accepted, and expressed usually fade away, while if not expressed they may build and explode. If young children are not encouraged to *tell* others how they feel, they are likely to *show* us how they feel through their actions. If we promote honesty of expression, we can at the same time foster honesty in living.

It is important to remember that children almost never lie to aggravate us. They usually lie to cope with fear, to gain love, affection or approval, to avoid punishment, to gain status, or to protect their self-esteem. Lies can also be a path to wish fulfillment or to escape bothersome truths or everyday problems. Because lies are often related to everyday issues, they need to be handled in an everyday, matter-

of-fact manner. Lies give us insight into children's emotional lives. If we can decipher the code, we can help them to overcome the need to lie, spare them the inner struggle which accompanies lying, and help them grow into more self-satisfied, socially acceptable individuals.

References

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Children's Center

Bridgewater State College
Burnell Campus School
Room 135
Bridgewater, MA 02325

Staff

Nancy Clark, director
Jane Doyon, lead teacher
Eileen Estudante, lead teacher
Debbie Drago, teacher
Joanne Hogan, teacher
Angela Magnarelli, teacher
Elise McHugh, teacher
Laura Corbett, clerk

Reprint by permission:

Phone: 508-531-1244

Fax: 508-531-6165

Email: nclark@bridgew.edu

<http://www.bridgew.edu/childrenscenter/>



PAJAMA DAY Friday, March 20, 2009

The Investigator and Explorer classes will celebrate the beginning of spring by having a Pajama Day! Children (and teachers) can wear pajamas to school. Stuffed animal friends are invited as well. We will have breakfast food during morning snack time and we will play games with our stuffies.

In conjunction with our Pajama Day, we will be collecting **new pajamas, sizes newborn through 16**, to donate to Cradles to Crayons. This organization distributes new and gently used items to families in need. There will be a labeled box for your anonymous donation in the hallway, next to the Lending Library. Let's hope we can fill a box with

P.J.s for Kids!

You are **not** required to donate pajamas in order for your child to participate in Pajama Day. Children who are not comfortable wearing pajamas to school may choose to wear sweatpants and a t-shirt or their everyday school clothes. If wearing slippers to school, please don't forget sneakers for outside activities.

For information about Cradles to Crayons, please visit:

<http://cradlestocrayons.org/2/content/view/59/89/>

