



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

Questions from readers

Question:

My daughter is a senior in high school and I believe she is sexually active. This goes against my moral beliefs, but I realize that at her age there is probably little I can do. Should I talk with her about this or simply respect her privacy and not say anything?

Answer:

Your daughter is a minor and is still under your care and supervision. You should absolutely speak with her. Approach this issue in a sensitive manner. Find a time when you both are alone and your daughter is receptive to such a discussion. While not backing down from your own values, you should also be respectful of her viewpoint. Be sure that your daughter is knowledgeable about her sexual health and is taking precautions to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. This type of conversation, although uncomfortable for both of you, will communicate an important message about your willingness to help your daughter navigate this very important issue.

Question:

I'm becoming increasingly concerned about my 8 year old son. I'm not sure I can trust him. I have caught him lying on several occasions, sometimes about very minor issues. He says these are only "white lies" or that he was only joking around, an expression he has heard from his dad. I'm not sure if I should make a big deal about this or just let it go.

Answer:

Trust built upon honesty is the foundation of all relationships. I'm not sure there is really a "white lie" as any misrepresentation is potentially cancerous to trust. A habit of such lies can easily undermine trust and cause significant problems for your son with you and others. The first way to deal with this is for your husband to stop using the expression "white lie" and to focus on being truthful in all matters. With the example that you set and the importance that you place upon honesty and integrity, your son is more likely to imitate what you do. Make certain he understands the serious consequences of lying and be sure to follow through with a significant punishment for such misbehavior.

Question:

My son loves soccer but really dislikes his coach. He feels that his coach treats him unfairly, that he yells too much and doesn't let him play enough in the games. I tend to agree with my son, but I'm not sure if I should intervene on his behalf, or simply let him finish out the season. He is entering fourth grade.

Answer:

Unless the coach is verbally abusive or grossly inappropriate, stay out of this one. Instead, advise your son how to approach his coach, asking what skills your son needs to work on to improve his performance. We all have to learn to get along with different types of personalities in this world. Intervening on your son's behalf will undermine his learning some very important lessons about dealing with difficult situations.

Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children's Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit www.childrendayton.org/ramey and join Dr. Ramey on facebook at www.facebook.com/drgregramey.

© 2010 The Children's Medical Center of Dayton. Columns may be reproduced with the permission of Dayton Children's.