

Trustworthiness

Grades 9-12

Segment Summary:

Jenny Champa's parents walk a fine line between trusting that their daughter will make the right choices in life and installing a tracking device in Jenny's car to monitor her movement. While Jenny feels the device is an invasion of privacy, her parents maintain they are only concerned with her safety.

You say you're going to a friend's house. Will your parents ever know where you really went? If you're Jenny Champa, your mother already knows. Jenny's mother installed a tracking device on her daughter's car. The device tells Mrs. Champa where her daughter drove, when she arrived at her destination and how fast she drove. When Jenny's mother had the device installed, she felt she needed to check up on her daughter, even though Jenny demonstrated trustworthy behavior as swimming coach. Jenny felt that at her age, her parents ought to have faith in her judgment. She says putting the device in her car is a trust issue because "if she [her mother] trusted me ... she wouldn't be checking me to make sure I was lying all the time," she says. Eventually, Jenny's mother agreed with her daughter's reasoning. Six months after having the device installed, Mrs. Champa had it removed. Jenny's mother says she began to feel uncomfortable with the device, and she thought it was a violation of the trust she had established with her daughter. Mrs. Champa also realized she had to start giving Jenny the freedom to make some of her own choices.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify all of the trust issues involved in Jenny's situation.
2. What message did Jenny's mother send when she had a tracking device installed in Jenny's car?
3. Many parents want to make sure their children are safe. When do parents cross the line of making sure their child is safe and invading his or her privacy?
4. Is Jenny entitled to some privacy? When are you entitled to your privacy at school, at home, in your community, etc.?
5. When a child has betrayed a parent's trust, is he or she still entitled to privacy? How much privacy?
6. Do parents have the right to test their children for drugs? Do you think this an invasion of a child's privacy?
7. Have you ever checked on a person's story because you didn't believe what he or she said? What happened?
8. What happens to a relationship when no trust exists?
9. Have you ever been in a situation where your parents didn't trust you? What happened?
10. Based on your past actions, do you honestly feel your parents should have trusted you?
11. When you lose your parents' trust, what can you do to get it back?
12. Have your parents or other adults ever done anything that caused you to lose your trust in them? What happened?

Vocabulary Words and Definitions:

Birth order (n.)

Definition: the sequence in which siblings are born

Context: When talking about her children, Debra always lists them in their birth order, starting with the oldest.

Devious (adj.)

Definition: using tricks or lies to get what a person wants

Context: Their method of collecting money was devious, but not illegal.

Faith (n.)

Definition: a strong belief that someone or something can be trusted to be right or to do the right thing

Context: I have a lot of faith in my daughter because she always makes the right decisions.

Integrity (n.)

Definition: the quality of being honest and of always having high moral principles

Context: Rooney brought dignity and integrity to his sales profession, often giving first-time buyers a good deal on a new car.

Intimidated (adj.)

Definition: feeling worried and less confident because one is in a difficult situation

Context: Johanas did not feel intimidated even though most of the football players were twice his size.

Ramification (n.)

Definition: consequence; a result or effect of something one does

Context: She did not consider that suspension would be the ramification of bringing a weapon to school.

Sibling (n.)

Definition: a brother or sister

Context: Ramón is my younger sibling.

Tracking device (n.)

Definition: a machine or other small object that allows a person to know where someone or something is or what has happened to the person or thing

Context: Because of the tracking device in Jenny's car, her mother knew where she was going at all times.

Trustworthiness (n.)

Definition: the amount a person can be believed and depended on

Context: Normally, we don't let students work in the office, but because of Tamara's trustworthiness, we have made an exception.

Wiretap (v.)

Definition: to secretly listen to other people's telephone conversations by attaching a listening device to the wires of a phone

Context: Mr. Derrington threatened to wiretap the phone because he caught his daughter making mysterious, late-night calls.

Source: *Longman Advanced American Dictionary*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. 2000.

Activity: An Experiment in Trust

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Conduct an experiment on the trustworthiness of strangers
- Predict the trustworthiness and integrity of strangers
- Conclude the significance of communication when trusting others
- Analyze the levels of stress associated with trusting complete strangers
- Identify methods for coping with the stress when having to trust strangers

Materials:

- Pens, pencils
- Paper

Procedure:

1. Initiate a discussion with the class about trusting strangers and stress:
 - Have you ever had to trust a stranger to help you (disabled car, explain directions, etc.)?
 - How did it feel to have to ask a stranger for help? Were you intimidated or nervous?
 - Do you think trusting strangers to help you would be easier over time?
 - How do you think it would affect your stress level to trust strangers to help you?
2. Explain to students that they will learn how stressful it can be when they are in a situation where they have to trust strangers.
3. Before beginning the activity, have students predict how they will feel and what they think their stress levels would be.
4. Ask students to choose a situation in which they would have to trust a stranger for help. It has to be something that will not put students in physical danger and something they can repeat several times (at least three to five times, depending on the difficulty of the task).

Examples:

- A blind person trying to buy something (students can use sunglasses to hide their eyes)
 - A disabled person (in a wheelchair needing something out of reach, on crutches or with a walker having difficulty maneuvering)
 - Someone who doesn't speak English, or limited English, asking for directions
 - A person who needs his or her bags watched (at a food court or airport) while he or she does something else
5. While students are conducting their experiments, they should document their experiences. They need to consider the following questions:
 - Were you comfortable asking strangers for help?
 - Did you assume that some strangers appeared more devious than others? Explain.
 - Did asking strangers for help cause you to feel more stress and anxiety?
 6. After students complete their experiments, allow time for them to discuss the stress they felt while conducting their experiments. Remind students that for some people, this is a way of life. Ask students to suggest some methods for coping with the stress levels if they had to do this on a regular basis.