

Why Virtue Matters - Virtue Essay Competition 2015 Finalists:

Honesty

What is Honesty?

"Honesty is the best policy", a proverb from Benjamin Franklin, focusing on the importance of honesty and what it means. But what does honesty really come down to? Who do we lie to? Why do we lie? People who lie tend to be covering up the truth, whether this means lying to peers, friends, or even authoritative figures. We could be doing this to impress people or avoid embarrassment, but one thing is clear; almost everyone lies, or has lied before.

But why is honesty the best policy? Being honest with yourself and others gives you a good sense of peace; you are comfortable being yourself, and whoever you're surrounding yourself with, clearly is too. Honesty gives everyone peace of mind, because there is nothing you feel you need to hide, or force about yourself in front of others. Friendships become stronger, relationships become more trusting, and you become more mentally stable.

Being dishonest creates a constant lie that can be difficult to live in. Covering up the truth only ever leads to having to live with the lie, and remembering details of it too. This requires a constant attention to detail and can be very overwhelming to keep up with. Lying is a quick way out of a problem, and living an honest lifestyle takes a lot of effort, but it can be incredibly rewarding; being yourself and respecting yourself enough not to lie about things.

Although people sometimes lie to cover up a hurtful truth, it's important to use honesty to encourage and build confidence in someone, rather than criticising and hurting them. It is important to understand to understand that being honest has long-term benefits rather than an instant benefit that doesn't last.

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Honest people are always the people in life, who are most trusted and respected, because they live a good and morally right lifestyle, who considers the long term effects of their actions. Lies always come with consequences, and as much as someone lies, their failure to provide the truth will always haunt them, so honest people tend to live out much less stressful lives too.

A step in the right direction would be to figure out who you're lying to, and to begin fixing this. Clearing up any lies and apologising for any misunderstanding. You also need to remember to forgive yourself and understand that, although you made a mistake, you are helping yourself, and becoming a better person in the long run.

Many notable names are well known for their honesty, who have been clearly respected, through their lives. Names such as Marilyn Monroe, George Washington, Ghandi, and the best known Abraham Lincoln, also known as "honest Abe" for being truly honest and a well-respected president. Today, he is still well known, and can be seen on the five dollar bill, still having an impact on Americans, and even the rest of the world, about how honesty is key to strong relationships and a better, more peaceful life.

"No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar" - Abraham Lincoln

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