



TUNING INTO TRUTHFULNESS

“Go inside and listen to your body, because your body will never lie to you. Your mind will play tricks, but the way you feel in your heart, in your guts, is the truth.”

-Don Miguel Ruiz

OVERVIEW

Students participate in a body scan while listening to various scenarios about honesty and dishonesty, and begin to notice how truthfulness and dishonesty feel in the body so they can make better choices.

LEVELS

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- At the beginning of the school year when cultivating a positive classroom climate
- To create a psychologically-safe classroom climate that makes it safe for students to be honest
- If one or more students have a tendency to lie or cheat
- During circle time or advisory

TIME REQUIRED

- < 1 hour

LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School

MATERIALS

- [Dishonesty/Honesty Scenarios](#)
- Writing/drawing materials
- Optional: Template for [Honesty in the Body](#) drawing activity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore bodily awareness of honesty and dishonesty
- Discuss how recognizing internal cues around honesty and dishonesty can help us make better choices

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)
- [Supports, Modifications and Accommodations for Students](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Honesty
- Integrity

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Ethical Decision-Making and Social Responsibility

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Open Awareness
- Non-Judgment

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- If you feel comfortable doing so, take a moment to bring to mind a situation where you were dishonest. What sensations do you notice arising in your body when you have concealed the truth?
- Next, take a moment to think of a time when you were able to be fully honest and share your truth with someone else. What sensations do you notice arising in your body?
- Did anything about these brief moments of reflection surprise you? Did they challenge or validate anything for you?
- If you choose to do the extension about detecting dishonesty in others: Has there been a time when your body signaled someone else's dishonesty, even before your brain detected it? What clues did you notice? Is your body always right? What might complicate or get in the way of this somatic (bodily) awareness (e.g., anxiety, stress)?
- Please review [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#) before doing this practice, as body awareness practices can be uncomfortable for some students. Always allow students to opt out or modify

how they participate (e.g., keeping their eyes open).

- Also, be sensitive to students who may deal with circumstances in which **not telling the truth is a matter of survival**. For this reason, the scenarios for this practice are school-based.

INSTRUCTIONS

DISCUSS: WHAT DO HONESTY AND DISHONESTY FEEL LIKE

- *Today we're going to talk about honesty. What do you think of when you hear the word "honesty"? What does it mean to be honest at school? What does it mean to be honest with your friends? Is being honest always easy to do? When is it challenging to be honest at school or with your friends?*
- *Have you ever noticed how it feels in our bodies to be honest and/or not tell the truth? Sometimes our bodies can give us clues about when we're making good choices, like being honest, or when we're not making a good choice, like telling a lie. [Note: When having this discussion, be sensitive to students who may deal with circumstances in which not telling the truth is a matter of survival.]*
- *We're going to practice noticing how our bodies feel when we think about being honest versus dishonest.*

***Optional science connection:** For older students you can introduce the term "[interoceptive awareness](#)", which means "to perceive and understand internal bodily sensations." We are practicing this kind of awareness when we are paying attention to how our body feels.

PRACTICE: BODY SCAN INTRODUCTION

- Note: If you have done body scans with your students before, you can skip the following explanation. Instead, you can just mention to your students that they are going to do a body scan.
- *We are going to do something called a body scan. In a moment, I'm going to invite you to close your eyes or just relax your eyes down to the ground. You can keep your eyes open, just please give your neighbor space and privacy to try this out if they want to. We are going to just check in with how our bodies are feeling, step by step - from the tops of our heads to the tips of our toes.*
- *Let's start by taking three deep breaths together. Breathe in through your nose [pause], and out through your mouth. Notice how your body feels right now, from the top of your head down to your toes. There's no right or wrong way to feel - just notice.*

PRACTICE: HOW DO DISHONESTY AND HONESTY FEEL IN OUR BODIES?

- From this list of [dishonesty/honesty scenarios](#), choose one to share with students. [Note: each scenario includes a dishonesty and honesty version.] You can also make up your own scenarios.
- Read each scenario slowly, pausing for 30-45 seconds after each one to let students tune into their body sensations.
- Emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" body sensations—the goal is awareness. Some students may not notice distinct sensations, and that's perfectly normal.
- *Now, I'm going to read two short scenarios. While I'm reading, you can quietly feel how your body is feeling, and note if you notice any parts of your body reacting to the scenario. Try to really imagine yourself in this situation. For this activity, we are not going to shout out or say our*

feelings out loud. We are just going to notice. There's no right or wrong way to feel—just notice.

- Read the dishonesty scenario first. Pause for 30-45 seconds to give students time to notice how they feel.
- Read the honesty scenario next. Pause for 30-45 seconds to give students time to notice how they feel. [Note: Always close with the honesty scenario so that students are left with a positive feeling in their bodies and minds.]
- *Take one more deep breath and slowly open your eyes.*

CLOSE: REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

- Give students a few minutes to draw or write about their response to this practice.
- Invite students to share their experiences:
 - *When you imagined being dishonest, how did your body feel?* [If no responses, some suggestions might be: Maybe parts of your body felt tight? Heavy? Uncomfortable? Butterflies in your stomach?]
 - *When you imagined being honest, how did your body feel?* [If no responses, some suggestions might be: Maybe you noticed feelings like lightness, warmth, or relaxation? But sometimes honesty isn't easy either—did anyone notice feelings in your body at the idea of being honest, especially if it was difficult?]
 - *Your body is giving you important information about your choices. When you feel light and relaxed, that can be your body's way of saying "this feels right." When you feel tense or uncomfortable, your body might be telling you "think about this choice."*
 - *Remember, your body is smart and can give you some clues when you are trying to make choices.*

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

- Invite younger students to use the [Honesty in the Body](#) template to draw where they notice bodily sensations for honesty and dishonesty.
- Invite older students to journal about times when body awareness helped them make good choices.
- Choose a scenario from the "Detecting Dishonesty" section of the [dishonesty/honesty list](#), and have students notice how it feels in their bodies to have someone lie to them.

SOURCE

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REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Was it easy or challenging for students to identify bodily sensations?
- If you do this practice again, how might you prepare students to tune into their bodies? For example, would your students respond to this activity better after moving their bodies around?
- Do you notice any shifts in students' conversations around honesty after this practice?
- Could you use this exercise in restorative practices/conflict resolution, keeping in mind students' safety?

- Are there other topics into which you could integrate bodily awareness of emotions, such as [generosity](#), [courage](#), or [fairness](#) throughout the school day?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research has shown that tuning in with how our emotions feel in our bodies, or interoceptive awareness, contributes to [better emotion regulation](#) and [self-control](#). In turn, this can increase resistance to temptation and reduce tendencies towards dishonesty.

For example, in a [study](#) of 67 university students in Italy, researchers found that those who participated in an 8-week mindfulness meditation series, which included bodily awareness, reported greater interoceptive awareness and a lower tendency for dishonesty, compared to their control group peers.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Honesty is an important building block of a healthy, thriving society. For instance, when students cheat, it can encourage others to [cheat](#), gradually eroding academic integrity within the classroom. Schools therefore provide powerful platforms for cultivating honesty as a core value among students.

And the benefits of fostering honesty extend beyond [academics](#), helping young people make [healthier choices](#) and nurture [trusting](#), positive relationships with others, which, in turn, can also contribute to better [engagement in school](#).

TERMS OF USE

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