

(DIS)HONESTY
THE TRUTH ABOUT LIES

SLIPPERY SLOPES
A FILM-BASED ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE



Table of Contents



Introduction

- 3 Introductory Note: How We Lie to Everyone - Especially Ourselves
- 5 Module Index & Standards Alignment
- 6 On Academic Dishonesty
- 7 About This Curriculum: Description, Purchasing & Pricing



Key Modules & Lesson Plans

- 8 **The Fudge Factor**
 - 9 M & M Experiment
 - 10 M & M Worksheet
 - 13 Probability Chart: M&Ms
 - 15 Roll the Dice Experiment
 - 17 Roll the Dice Worksheet
 - 18 Tally Worksheet: Instructions
 - 19 Tally Worksheet: Blank
 - 20 Probability Chart: Dice
 - 22 A Summary of Forces that Shape Dishonesty
 - 23 Film-Based Discussion: “Everybody’s Doing it”: Joe Papp’s Story
- 25 **More Debate**
 - 26 Conflicts of Interest: Tim Donaghy’s Story
 - 27 Lying for Someone Else: Kelley Williams Bolar’s Story
 - 28 Creativity: Ryan Holiday’s Story
 - 29 White Lies: Etgar Karet’s Story
- 30 **Design a Truth Box**



Bonus Mix & Match Activities

- 35 Quick List of Adaptable Activities
- 36 Stealing Pencils: How Distance from the Problem Affects Behavior
- 37 Design for Social Trust: Critical Thinking & Problem Solving to Improve Honesty
- 39 A Story from Dan



Appendix

- 40 Glossary
- 41 Additional Resources & Materials
- 43 Core Curriculum Learning Standards: Math: Statistics & Probability
- 44 Core Curriculum Learning Standards English Language Arts
- 48 Credits



Introductory Note

How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves

Creators of The (Dis)Honesty Project:

Dan Ariely
Yael Melamede

Educational Curriculum Written and Designed by:

Marisa Morán Jahn

Contributing Writers/Editors:

Holly Meehl
Madison Newbound
Maggie Carroll

Topics of Conversation:

Academic Dishonesty
Election Campaigns
Insider Trading
Integrity
Intellectual Property
Plagiarism
Social Inequality
Workplace Ethics

The Urgency To Learn About (Dis)Honesty

From plagiarism, to infidelity, to financial fraud, dishonesty seems to be a universal part of the world we live in. It's human nature to lie, we all do it! But little fibs can snowball into large-scale problems with major implications for society. The frequent revelations of lying and cheating within some of our greatest institutions are disturbing and disheartening. The proliferation of dishonesty on Wall Street, in major corporations, in politics, in the military, in sports, in addition to our private lives, suggests we have lost our way. Studies show that we don't really understand the causes and complexities of dishonesty. This project is a result of this concern and is an exploration of human fallibility and the factors that make people most likely to succumb to dishonesty.

In 2002, Dan Ariely met John Perry Barlow, a former lyricist for the Grateful Dead. John had been working as a consultant for a few companies including Enron which had imploded in 2001 as a result of large scale fraud and corruption at the highest levels. Dan asked John whether he had witnessed any misbehavior during his time there. John responded that he hadn't seen anything sinister at the time but in retrospect he couldn't believe how oblivious he had been to all the signs. John's perspective and description of his own "wishful blindness" caught Dan's attention. Dan started to wonder whether he and most people would have noticed what was going on at Enron or would most people have been just as blindsided as John. Press coverage at the time suggested that the demise of Enron was due largely to the scheming of a few "bad apples" at the company but John's perspective suggested there was more to it than that.

A few years later, the Wall Street crisis of 2008 demonstrated even more clearly that the narrative of a few "bad apples" is not sufficient — it doesn't explain the variety and scale of misbehavior involved in major catastrophes. Lots of other factors were at play that led to a global meltdown: wishful blindness, conflicts of interest, and social norms are just a few of them. Dan has been studying dishonesty ever since and his research suggests that we are all much more susceptible to falling down a slippery slope than we think.

In order to study dishonesty, we need to first figure out what forces really cause people to cheat or not and apply this improved understanding to curb dishonesty. This method of looking at how actual behavior impacts society is the foundation of behavioral science. If we can better understand the triggers of dishonesty and the factors at work, hopefully we can figure out ways to better protect ourselves from our own bad behavior and that of others.



Integrating This Curriculum

- Academic Honesty
- Art classes
- Book clubs
- Continuing Education (CLEs, etc.)
- Corporate Retreats
- Cultural initiatives
- Ethics Training & Compliance
- Math classes
- Monthly school assemblies
- Orientation Weeks
- Professional Development
- Religious Programs
- Weekly staff meetings

Real-World Relevance

Historical Examples:

- Abramoff Lobbying Scandal
- Atlanta Cheating Scandal
- FIFA
- NSA Surveillance Scandal
- Swiftboat Affair
- Watergate

Controversial Topics:

- Abortion
- Climate Change
- LGBTQ Rights
- Racial Conflict

Introductory Note (cont'd)

This Curriculum & The (Dis)Honesty Project

This curriculum is built around the film, “(Dis)Honesty – The Truth About Lies” and is a component of a larger initiative called The (Dis)Honesty Project, a collaboration between celebrated behavioral scientist and bestselling author Dan Ariely, and award winning filmmaker Yael Melamede. Our film, “(Dis)Honesty - the Truth about Lies,” combines research with real stories. These stories mirror Dan’s findings and offer teachable scenarios which inspired this curriculum. At the back of this curriculum is an appendix with resources including articles and books by the behavioral scientists in the film and by others. We hope that you will in turn share your research with us so that we can all continue to expand our understanding of this complex topic.

Real-World Relevance

Discussions about honesty and dishonesty can be tricky and can trigger some sensitive emotions about race, gender, and contemporary political events. Embrace this if you’re comfortable in productively guiding a non-judgemental discussion where students feel safe in voicing basic questions and unpopular/controversial perspectives. As an alternative, consider meeting students’ need to reflect upon real events by using historical examples of (dis)honesty.

Opportunities to Integrate This Curriculum

This curriculum is aligned with prevailing U.S. middle and high school Core Curriculum Standards, but it anticipates many other opportunities for adoption — from private schools to university education, to corporate settings, to book clubs, professional development, ethics training and continuing education — and more! The hands-on, creative, and brainstorming activities are fun ways to break up other professional development training sessions. The film-based discussions are great ways to dive deep into ethics. The quick icebreaker activities can help weave meatier discussions into earlier parts of the day. The brainstorm and art-based activities can be used as the core of an ethics module in an afterschool or in-school class on religion, art, social studies, etc.

Email us with your successes, challenges and any suggestions!

Sincerely,

Yael, Dan, Marisa, Holly, Maggie, Madison - The (Dis)Honesty Education Team
truth@thedishonestyproject.com



See CCLS Details
starting on page 43

Learning Standards Alignment

Core Curriculum Learning Standards (CCLS)

		MATH: Statistics & Probability	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Standards	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Speaking & Listening
FUDGE FACTOR				
M&M Experiment (Basic)		✓		✓
Roll the Dice Experiment (Advanced)		✓		
Film-Based Discussion: Everybody's Doing It			✓	✓
DEBATE				
Conflicts of Interest			✓	✓
Lying for Someone Else			✓	✓
Creativity			✓	✓
White Lies			✓	✓
DESIGN A TRUTH BOX				
Design a Truth Box: Resetting Rituals			✓	✓
BONUS MIX & MATCH ACTIVITIES				
Stealing Pencils: Distance from the Problem			✓	✓
Design for Social Trust: Improving Honesty			✓	✓

KEY MODULE

BONUS MODULE



On Academic (Dis)Honesty

**“The Truth is rarely pure
and never simple.”**

—Oscar Wilde

Academic Honesty is a major issue for schools around the country and has been for decades. Technology has made the topic more complicated: essays and assignments can now be easily purchased online; exchanging and sharing information is simpler than ever; knowing where the lines are between what’s permissible and what’s not is tricky. Rules are murky and students have trouble understanding instructions in the way teachers and administrators would expect. On top of that, students are increasingly anxious about their grades and academic performance. Getting into the best schools and getting the best jobs has never been more competitive.

Take all of these elements together and the result is a system where cheating happens a lot.

This curriculum hopes to:

1. Examine why cheating actually happens by sharing specific stories of transgressions
2. Show the larger societal dangers and costs of dishonesty
3. Suggest ways we can improve our ethical practices

The project provides multiple ways to discuss dishonesty in non-judgmental terms. We hope the film and curriculum can help to create a forum where students can talk about the pressures and the variety of situations that might make it hard not to cheat. In doing so we hope to pave the way for students and organizations to work together to change the dynamics and the situations that lead to dishonesty.



Film-Based Discussion: Everyone is Doing It

Joe Papp's Story



“When you have the mindset, or when you think that everybody else is doing it, it makes it a lot easier to consider what you’ve done is legitimate.”

—Joe Papp



For participants of high school age and older.

Watch the film segment featuring Joe Papp, a professional cyclist who doped in order to (literally) get ahead and keep up with the rest of his crowd.

DVD Chapter 3: Everybody's Doing It (Approx 10 min into the movie)



Warm-Up Activity

After watching Joe's clip, have students discuss what Joe means by “Everyone is Doing It” and how that affected his approach to doping. Ask students if they've ever gotten wrapped up in something because it was the popular thing to do?





Lying for Someone Else

Kelley Williams Bollar's Story

“When I lied on the application, I just thought I was doing what was in the best interest of my daughters.”

—Kelley Williams Bolar



Warm Up/Take Home Activity

Discuss what type of factors lead parents/care givers to lie for their kids? When do you think these lies are justified and when do you think they are wrong? Can you think of examples around serious situations where lies are acceptable? For example, if you were hiding Anne Frank in your home and a Nazi knocked on your door and asked if you were hiding any Jews, what would/should you say? Can you think of other examples?



For participants of high school age and older. Watch the film segment featuring Kelley Williams Bolar, a woman who lied about what district she lived in so that her kids could go to a better school.



DVD Chapter 8: Lying for Others (Approx 35 min into the movie)

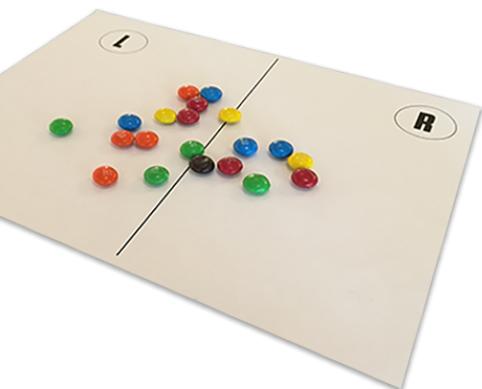
Debate or Written Response

Ask students to imagine a fair system of getting into school. Encourage them to use words, images, skits, or gestures to describe and explain their solution.



1. Ask the group to raise their hands if they would answer yes to the following question, “If this was you, would you do what Kelley did?”
2. Now have the group count off by twos and move to different sides of the room. Tell them that Group 1 will represent Kelley’s side of the debate. Group 2 will represent the school board. If possible, encourage students to research the case so that they are well informed about both sides.
3. Ask each group to write down arguments defending their side of the debate with one person as a note-taker.
4. Ask each group to circle the two arguments they listed that they feel are the strongest and share out.
5. Discuss what made some arguments stronger than others (emotional appeal, evidence to substantiate a point, appeal to the everyday person, etc.).





The Fudge Factor: M&Ms

How we misbehave and still think of ourselves as “good” people

Note that there are two versions of this activity—one for students of all ages and another for those learning fractions and percentages.

M&M Experiment

Basic experiment for all ages



See accompanying video for reference: bit.ly/mmexperiment

1. Ask participants to take a seat and hand out the Left-Right Worksheet (at the end of the lesson plan). If participants ask what kind of activity this is, you should NOT say that it's related to ethics or lying. You can say it's about counting or about probability; try not to reveal the truth and not to lie...
2. Ask students to choose a side of the worksheet in their heads — either Left or Right. They should NOT write their choice down.
3. Give them paper cups filled with 20 M&Ms. If you can't use M&Ms, use another type of treat or mix that appeals to the participants.
4. Tell them to spill the contents over the middle of the paper carefully.
5. Now tell them that they will get to eat the M&Ms that fell on the side they chose in their head (Left or Right). Those that fell on the other side, they need to return.
6. If any fell outside the paper, tell them to push them back on to the nearest side of the page. If any fell right in the middle, tell them to push them to whatever side seems fair.
7. Tell them to return the M&Ms that fell on the side they did NOT choose into the cup. Tell them to pick the M&Ms up one by one rather than returning them all at once to the cup.
8. Ask them to count how many M&Ms they returned to the cup and write that number down on their piece of paper and return the cup to you.
9. Statistically, you should receive back close to half of the total number of M&Ms that you originally gave out. So for example, if you have 15 participants who each received 20 M&Ms, you should receive about 150 M&Ms back which averages 10 M&Ms per participant. The actual number of M&Ms you receive back will probably be less because many participants will find a way to keep more than they give back. Announce to the class the total number of M&Ms you received back. You won't actually know who in the class fudged their answers but chances are, that around 70% will cheat (our theory is that treats may make that number even higher than similar experiments where the reward is money)!

The Fudge Factor:
“The ability to misbehave
and think of ourselves as
good people.”

—Dan Ariely



A Story From Dan

When Dan Ariely was thirty, he decided to trade his motorcycle for a car. To help him decide what car to get, he found a website that provided advice for purchasing cars. The website was based on an interview procedure, and it presented a lot of questions that ranged from preferences for price and safety to what kind of headlights and brakes the consumer desired. After about twenty minutes, the process ostensibly reveals to the consumer his or her dream car. When Dan first took this test, the website suggested a very sensible four-door family oriented sedan. Deciding this was not for him, he went back into the program and “fixed” his answers several times. He kept this up until the program recommended a small convertible. “Surely the right car for me!” Dan said to himself.

As Dan notes, sometimes we don’t make choices based on our explicit preferences. Instead, we have a gut feeling about what we want, and we go through a process of mental gymnastics, applying all kinds of justifications to manipulate the criteria. That way, we can get what we really want, but at the same time keep up appearances to ourselves and to others - that we are acting in accordance with our rational and well-reasoned preferences.

Examples of Mental Gymnastics:

- Re-taking one’s temperature over and over until it gives us a result that justifies a sick day
- Flipping a coin over and over again to get the result we want
- Manipulating data or information to line up with our beliefs

Discuss the consequences of these and other examples in personal situations, work, situations, and others.



The (Dis)Honesty Project's educational curriculum is made possible by a grant from the Templeton Foundation.



John
Templeton
Foundation

Credits

SALTY Features

SALTY Features is an independent film production company founded in 2003 by **Yael Melamede**. SALTY's goal is to create media that is thought provoking, vital and enhances the world. SALTY's past films include: INOCENTE (winner of the 2012 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short); DESERT RUNNERS; WHEN I WALK; BRIEF INTERVIEWS WITH HIDEOUS MEN; THE INNER LIFE OF MARTIN FROST; MY ARCHITECT (nominated for an Academy Award in 2004).

saltyfeatures.com

Center for Advanced Hindsight

Founded by **Dan Ariely**, the Center for Advanced Hindsight's central goal is to develop great insights about an extensive and diverse set of research projects. Needless to say, all of this work is done retrospectively, i.e. "in hindsight." Research interests include cheating behavior & morality, forgiveness; counterfeits & identity, self-signaling; conflicts of interest in the medical arena; health issues such as overeating and obesity, sexual health, health care; pain; dating behavior; placebos; taxes; opportunity cost ("If I buy these shoes, how many lattes must I live without?"); wealth distribution (perceived, real and ideal); self-control devices and incentive systems; and more — each with a focus on the dissemination of Science to the greater public. We seek to make research accessible and relevant to the masses.

advanced-hindsight.com

Studio REV-

A non-profit organization founded by **Marisa Morán Jahn**, Studio REV- (as in, to "rev" an engine) combines bold ideas and sound research to produce creative works that impact the lives of low-wage workers, immigrants, teens, and women. Key projects include El Bibliobandido (a story-eating bandit), Video Slink Uganda (experimental films bootlegged into Uganda's black market), the NannyVan (a bright orange mobile design lab on wheels), Contratados (a Yelp! for migrant workers), an app for domestic workers, and the CareForce (an immersive media project about America's fastest growing workforce — caregivers).

studiorev.org