



It Takes A Thief

by Nancy Thomas

Why do they steal?

A child with sticky fingers must make restitution by earning the money (sweat equity) and paying back double for the value of the item stolen. Parents should become happy rather than angry, encouraging rather than discouraging. Happy about stealing?! Children with RAD often delight in pushing parents closer to the edge of anger. When we choose joy over anger, we win, and so do our children. Try getting happy that you get paid back double. Get happy that you have a child with eagle eyes because they know where your lost items are like your car keys or TV remote. They can be very helpful. We want to shape the behavior so that the virtues surrounding it grow and the actual stealing stops by having them make restitution and getting happy when they get more practice earning money. Don't let them see you seething. Academy Award winners have nothing over an awesome Mom and Dad. We were trained by the best hams on the planet; our kids!

'Naming the Need' Sarah Naish

One of the most useful ways to control a child's behaviour is by helping them to understand why they do it. This builds in 'inhibitors' for when you are not there. The child's need to steal is so strong it defies all logic and breaks through boundaries. The underlying cause of their stealing is almost always the search for nurture, although the child is unaware of this. With my children I stopped the stealing by 'Naming the Need' in the following way;

R aged 16 was shoplifting and stole chocolate on a regular basis. All usual techniques had been tried and failed, (discussing it, sanctions, reparation, saying sorry to the shopkeeper, police intervention etc). One day I sat R down and said, 'I once knew a child who used to steal loads of chocolate like you. When I asked him about it, he said he was trying to fill the hole inside. Of course, I had to explain to him that the hole inside had been created when he was a hungry baby and no amount of chocolate could fill that up. We found out that the best way to fill that space was by having a hug instead. I think that is a bit like you'. R, of course, denied this was anything like her and then admitted that she often ate so much it made her feel physically sick. To my knowledge, she has never stolen anything since.