

ensure that they feel acknowledged. Practise this until it becomes second nature. Enjoy the love and positive energy that will follow.

## **'You can trust me'**

- *My teenager lies to me.*

In one of my workshops we were discussing the importance of trust in relationships, especially between parents and children. One of the participants shared the following experience. 'One of my children came home from spending two days at a friend's place. As usual, I welcomed her with open arms, sat her down and asked her to share with me her experiences of the past couple of days.

"I didn't feel comfortable with some of her answers. Such as: What did you do? — Nothing. Just nothing. Where did you go? — Nowhere. Who were you with? - just friends."

My intuition told me that she was hiding something.

Eventually I discovered that she had gone to a party with friends I disapproved of. I was more upset about her lying to me than about the party. Not trusting your daughter is like not having a daughter, I thought to myself. My natural instinct was to call her into my room; tell her that she was a liar and untrustworthy. Luckily this was one time that I managed to suppress my natural instincts.

I forced myself to pause for a few moments while I analysed what I was trying to accomplish. What I realised was that I was trying to get my daughter to be honest with me, and so improve our relationship. My next problem was what action did I need to take to achieve this goal? I very quickly realised that if I summoned her into my room, accused her of lying and told her she was not to be

trusted our relationship would be threatened and maybe destroyed.

After I had calmed down I began to consider a strategy of how best to deal with the situation. I called her into my room, saying it was for a discussion. I asked her if she had some time to talk to me about an issue that was very important to me. Once I was convinced that she was giving me her full attention, with no friend waiting on the phone for her, I began with the following ...

“I know that while you were at your friend’s house, you went to a party which was not consistent with our family's values. While this is in itself a great cause for concern, what bothers me even more is the fact that you were not honest with me about it. This can lead to a lack of trust between us, and even, more terribly, create distance between us in our future relationship. You are one of the most important people in my life, and I want to have a trusting relationship with you. So I say to you that I pledge now that I will be 100 per cent honest with you at all times. Whenever you ask me a question, you can guarantee 100 per cent that I will answer you honestly and truthfully. You won’t have to think twice about whether what I am saying to you is the truth or not. If I don’t want to answer you, I will simply tell you that I prefer not to answer. At all other times my answers will be 100 per cent clear and honest. Would you like your relationship with your mother to be one of full trust?” I asked her.

Of course she said yes. I then asked her if she could reciprocate with the same commitment, which meant that there would be no doubt in my mind that what she told me would be the absolute truth. She happily agreed.

I was very impressed and touched by this tale. This mother managed to take an issue which had the potential to cause a very sad, negative outcome, and turn it into a positive one.

***Being truthful when you know  
it will cost you, is the true test of honesty***

Following the mother's natural instinct, which was to call her daughter a liar, would have been an unforgivably harsh label to place on her daughter, and the daughter may well have walked away thinking, she didn't have a trusting relationship with her mother anyway, so she might as well do whatever I feel like. Instead, her mother used herself as an example of what she was prepared to do to establish an honest relationship, and this gesture of trust was something the daughter was happy to reciprocate.

## **Your own reflection**

- ***My child is rude to me when I get angry. I just want to teach manners.***
- ***My children mirror my anger. Why won't they learn?***

There was once a poor child who came to stay with his rich uncle who welcomed him with open arms. "I am giving you a room all for yourself!" said the uncle. The child was overwhelmed, because this was something he had never experienced in his own home.

The private room was very well decorated. One of its walls was a large mirror. Because the child had never seen a mirror before, he was shocked to discover another child in the room (who was really a reflection of himself). He got upset. He felt cheated. The anger was written all over his face. He was astonished to find out that the other child responded in the same way. "What a chutzpah! You don't belong here. Get out!" he screamed as he pointed to the door. He ran to his uncle, to inform him about the rude intruder who was showing him an angry face and pointing to