Writing Elves

MY LIFE. MY BLOG.

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Reading Log Lies

BY ACIMENT *on* OCTOBER 16, 2013 · (5)

Most nights, I go to sleep wondering if I am teaching my son to lie.

It's true. Straight up. Full disclosure.

Maybe it's because he's the fifth child. Or maybe it's just that I'm older. But every night when I tuck him into bed and he casually reminds me that he needs to do his reading log – well, something inside me just dies.

Because I would love to read to him. Truly. I would. I would love to hear him read as well. And he does read to me, and I to him. But the nightly 20 minute assignment and subsequent signing of some document attesting to such reading is driving me to drink unhealthy amounts of alcohol.

It wasn't always like this.

With my first child, I looked forward to filling out that form. I would sign my name each night and list the titles we read. I scorned the class mom who said that she always signed it, regardless of whether her son did the reading or not.

I would NEVER do that, I thought. What poor parenting!

I was the only mom who kept the chart unsigned on the days that we did not read. My daughter, distraught, would pick up anything that would count as "reading" just so I would fill out the form before we got in the car.

"Mom! I read the cereal box for 5 minutes! Please sign my reading log!"

But I didn't. Because I thought I would be teaching her to lie.

Of course, as the only child in her class who had a mom that kept it honest, she was also the only kid who did not get a gold star every single day on the "Super Star Readers!" chart. I thought I was laying the firm moral ground that she would need as an adult. I thought I was teaching her values.

Fast forward a few years, and I'm practically leading my seven year old down a path of fraud and tax evasion because now I nightly sign that paper without thinking twice. I'm tired, I've been on my feet all day, I finally get him into bed after three cups of water and some apple slices. And then he pulls out that final ace up his sleeve.

Don't let the happy sentiments fool you. This paper is the devil incarnate.

No more, teacher. No more.

I know the teacher means well. She wants to make sure the kids read. And that's important, I know. But the truth? I don't think I'm alone in my Reading Log lies. I'll bet there are legions of mothers and fathers – no doubt mothers and fathers with more than two children, mind you – who have no compunction about scrawling their names on that dreaded chart without cracking open a Maurice Sendak or Mary Pope Osbourne. I am done with the forced reading time and documentation of my library of picture books. Finished with endless lists of dates and page numbers and "minutes read." I will fill out that paper and hand it in with the full knowledge that I am committing some kind of elementary school perjury and I embrace that wholeheartedly.

Because I am sure that there is a larger group of parents who sit with their kids each night and slave through pages of homework. I am part of that group. We watch our kids while they do math problem after math problem. We yell at them from the kitchen while we are fixing dinner and we lose out on so many family moments because we are over-programmed and over-worked and stressed out.

I simply cannot add reading to the list of stresses.

So my son and I have a tacit understanding. He reads. I sign the reading log. When he doesn't read, I still sign the reading log, because he reads anyway. He has books under his bed. He reads on the weekends. And we read together as well. On days that I come home early. On Saturday afternoons and Friday nights. He picks up the books and reads without looking at the clock to make sure he has finished his required reading.

Technically, then, I guess I'm not really lying. I'm just mixing up the dates.

But I'll be damned before he doesn't get a star on the Reading Chart in his classroom.

5 replies

Yitz Weiss

October 16, 2013 • 2:43 pm

Gold star for this one Adina!

proseofrose

October 16, 2013 • 3:35 pm

I lied on the log too. My rationale was this: my son really enjoyed reading, but some days / weeks he wasn't that into it. I didn't want the "log" to turn reading from an enjoyable activity to a dreaded chore.

I was not one to teach my kid to never lie though. It's a sad truth that we all find ourselves in a position where it's just better to lie. The trick is to teach the kids when to lie. (If my boss wants me to do something tedious and unnecessary that will never be checked up on, I lie about that too. I guess the book log is really just 🙂 the kid version of that.)

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>
> **aciment**
>
> October 16, 2013 • 3:38 pm
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> That's a good way of looking at it. I agree.

Melinda Ziskinder

October 27, 2013 • 2:17 am

I'm pretty sure I'm guilty of this. And some other parenting fails, if they really have to be characterized that way (Family Guy anyone?) I really enjoy your posts, so I'm passing on this Sunshine Award that made its way to me recently. **http://melindaziskinder.wordpress.com/2013/10/27/so-im-not-just-talking-to-myself-yay/**

>
>
> **aciment**
>
> October 28, 2013 • 2:16 am
>
> Awesome! Thanks so much!
>
> And in terms of parenting "fails" keep this in mind: Parents who occasionally fail have well-rounded, happy, well-adjusted kids. Parents who are perfect 🙂 create neurotic, up-tight, nervous kids. Embrace the fails!