Opportunity Mindset Tips
Transforming Challenges into Possibilities

“I just found out my child has been stealing things! I am so upset. It makes me feel terrible!”

**CHALLENGE**
How can I get my child to understand that stealing is not okay?

**CHOICE**
You can decide how to think about this moment and how to respond. You can choose to see this challenge as a chance for your child to learn and grow.

**OPPORTUNITY**
When your child disrespects others or their belongings, you can help them learn about cause and effect – that what we do affects other people. As they learn to step back and think about the possible impact before they act, they can build the life skill of **Critical Thinking**, which can help them thrive in school and in life.

### SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGIES

1. **TAKE YOUR CHILD’S VIEW**
   - TRY TO FIGURE OUT why your child is stealing. Were they acting out? Seeking your attention? Did they want something they couldn’t have? Be aware of your feelings too. Are you afraid they’ll never learn right from wrong? Sometimes when children want to believe something, they’ll wish it’s true and then begin to believe it’s true. That’s called “magical thinking.” Lots of children do this. It’s part of learning to see the difference between what’s true and what isn’t.

2. **SHARE REASONS**
   - EXPLAIN YOUR POINT OF VIEW. Let your child know that stealing is not okay and that it upsets you. You can share your values, like honesty and respect. Share a story about a time when someone stole something from you or when you stole something and how it felt. Help them see the connection between one person’s actions and another person’s reactions. You can help them see the impact of their choices through learning the skill of Critical Thinking.

3. **PROVIDE CHOICES**
   - SET LIMITS and give your child options within those limits. In the heat of the moment, you can tell your child, “These things don’t belong to you. Stealing is not okay. When we return these things now, would you like to talk to them OR would you like to write them a note?”

4. **PROBLEM-SOLVE TOGETHER**
   - INVITE your child to think about the cause and effect of actions and reactions. Share a time when your child’s actions affected you. You can say, “I was feeling grumpy yesterday. When you drew a picture for me, I felt better!” Talk about how they felt when someone shared something with them or grabbed it away. Then problem-solve with them about how they are going to act when they want something someone else has without “stealing” it. Write down their ideas and select one to try.

5. **SCAFFOLD**
   - BUILD ON the progress your child makes. How did they feel when they asked their friend to draw a picture for them, rather than just taking one of their pictures? Help them think about cause and effect in other ways. Invite your child to conduct an experiment. Let them choose an action to take to try to bring about positive feeling in someone. Afterwards, talk about how it went.

An Opportunity Mindset means choosing to see a challenge as a chance to learn and grow.

**CRITICAL THINKING**
Critical Thinking means searching for knowledge that we can rely on to guide our beliefs, decisions, and actions. For more information visit: [www.mindinthemaking.org](http://www.mindinthemaking.org)