

And the Moral of the Story Is: Keep It Positive

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The New York Times:

The slower pace of summer means more time to tell stories to our kids, whether it's around a campfire or in a car on the long, long trip to our vacation spot. We tell these stories for many reasons: to entertain, to pass the time, to share adventures from our own past. And sometimes we tell stories in order to make a point.

Parents, teachers, and other adults have employed moral parables for thousands of years (Aesop's fables date to the sixth century B.C., and we're still telling kids who are slow off the mark about the tortoise and the hare). The lessons of these stories are so clear, their meaning so unambiguous, that we rarely stop to wonder if they're having the effect we intend.

That's what psychological research is for. Kang Lee, a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, has now tested whether hearing classic tales meant to encourage honesty—"Pinocchio," "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," and "George Washington and the Cherry Tree"—actually does make children less likely to lie. The surprising answer: One works, and the other two don't.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)