

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

Adapted from the TV game show, *To Tell the Truth*. Inspired by Dr. Edward Palmer, Vice President and Senior Research Fellow for Children's Television Workshop for the first 19 years. Dr. Palmer died in August 1999 and we dedicate this program to him.

Characters include a host and three celebrity guests. The host will introduce a topic to which each guest will respond. The audience is told that only one of the three celebrities will be speaking the truth. They are to guess which one is right. Each celebrity guest gives his or her statement, reading from the script provided, trying to deliver the statement in such a way as to make the audience believe it is true. At the conclusion of each round, the audience guesses which statement they believe is correct. The host then identifies the correct answer and which celebrity delivered the *true* response.

STAGING FOR THE GAME:

1. Room large enough for audience size, preferably with a raised stage area at the front. A podium for the host, table and chairs for the three celebrity guests and three identification cards (large enough to be read from back of room) labeled Celebrity # 1, Celebrity # 2 and Celebrity # 3. Chairs for an audience should be set auditorium style.
2. Four volunteers: one to play the host and three to play the roles of celebrity guests.
3. Four copies of the script, one for each participant.
4. Begin by asking the kids to name three celebrities their own age, or close to their age: (some suggestions: Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, Frankie Muniz, Hillary Duff). Write the names of the celebrities on the board in big letters.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

SCRIPT

HOST: Ladies and gentleman, welcome to *SPEAKING THE TRUTH*. I'm your host, Slappy Happy. Joining me today are three celebrity guests: Celebrity #1, (name)(wait for applause) Celebrity #2 (name) (wait for applause), and, Celebrity #3, (name) (wait for applause).

- (Serious tone): Now, ladies and gentlemen of our studio audience, let's review the game rules. Your job is to determine which of these Celebrities is Speaking the Truth. I will ask each of them a question and each one will try to convince you that they are speaking the truth. **Only one is**. Your job is to listen closely and determine which one - is - **SPEAKING THE TRUTH**.
- Let's begin **ROUND NUMBER ONE:** How many hours a week do most American kids spend watching television? Celebrity #1 what can you tell us?

Celebrity #1: Surprisingly enough, the amount is really quite small . . . about four (4) hours a week.

HOST: Celebrity #2, what do you think?

CELEBRITY #2: It used to be REALLY REALLY high but has changed recently because so many kids are involved in extra curricular activities. The new number is about 15 and a half hours a week.

HOST: Celebrity #3, your answer?

CELEBRITY #3: (*Smiling*). Ha. No way. It is **25 hours a week** or nothing! And . . . kids with VCRs, computers and video games spend as much as **35 hours per week**.

HOST: Okay, thank you Celebrity Guests. Ladies and gentlemen of the audience, with your applause, please identify the person you feel is ***SPEAKING THE TRUTH***.

- Is it Celebrity #1? (*wait for applause*);
- Celebrity #2? (*wait for applause*);
- Or Celebrity #3? (*wait*) Let's find out.
- Will the celebrity who is ***SPEAKING THE TRUTH*** please stand up.

CELEBRITIES 1, 2, & 3: (*All pretend to stand up, until **CELEBRITY #3** stands all the way up and begins to speak.*)

CELEBRITY #3: Most American kids spend more time watching TV than anything else. During the entire time a kid is in school, he **spends 11 thousand** hours going to school and close to **15 thousand hours** watching TV.

HOST:

- Thank you, Celebrity #3. Let's hear a big round of applause for Celebrity #3.

(THOUGHTFULLY) And I wonder what kids are watching during those **15 thousand hours.**

HOST: Now audience, let's begin **ROUND NUMBER TWO:** Do children ever imitate what they see on TV? Celebrity #1, would you like to begin?

CELEBRITY #1: Absolutely. Kids watch more than **250 Thousand** violent acts during the time they're in school, including **15 Thousand** murders. And there are almost no consequences, making TV violence very unrealistic. Kids think that it's okay to treat others like they see in the movies. What they think is that violence is a normal way to deal with problems, express emotions, settle arguments or prove yourself.

HOST: Okay, thanks, Celebrity #2, what do you think?

CELEBRITY #2: They see beautiful celebrities with perfect smiles, perfect bodies and it makes people want to take care of themselves better so that they can look like the people they see on TV.

HOST: I see. Celebrity #3?

CELEBRITY #3: Actually, TV teaches children **what not to do**. Kids are much smarter than people give them credit for. They know the difference between real violence and what's in movies or a songs and never imitate behavior that they've seen on TV or in the movies or in videogames.

HOST: Thank you, Celebrity #3. Audience, again, which celebrity is **SPEAKING THE TRUTH**.

- Is it Celebrity #1? (*wait*);
- Celebrity #2? (*wait*);
- Or Celebrity #3? (*wait*);
- Will the celebrity who is **SPEAKING THE TRUTH** please stand up!

CELEBRITIES 1, 2, &3: (*all pretend to stand up, until, finally, **CELEBRITY #1** stands all the way up.*)

HOST: Let's have some applause for Celebrity #1. Do you have anything to add?

CELEBRITY #1: Yes, there is one more thing that bothers me about this copycat thing. I hate it when I hear kids imitate the language and attitudes they see on TV. Often, kids on TV talk back to their parents and use clever put- downs that kids their age don't really use - or didn't until they started imitating their favorite TV characters. I can't stand it when I hear kids around me sound like TV characters. It's so stupid.

HOST: Now audience, you know what stereotyping means, right? A stereotype is when we describe people in a general way that usually is negative and over-simplified.

With that in mind, let's begin **ROUND NUMBER THREE:** Does television stereotype people and influence how you think about different ethnic groups? Celebrity #1, what do you think?

CELEBRITY #1: Not at all. TV shows people exactly how they are.

HOST: Thank you. Celebrity #2 what do you have to say?

CELEBRITY #2: TV used to stereotype people, like back in the 60s. But today, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Middle-Easterners are all portrayed pretty realistically.

HOST: Thank you Celebrity #2, Celebrity #3.

CELEBRITY #3: Unfortunately, what my co-guests have said is not true. We like to think that we've come a long way from stereotyping people but we haven't. For example, Sesame Street just released a study showing how African Americans are seen by little kids. They found that they see them as either 1) Musicians, sports figures, or entertainers of some sort, or 2) Crooks and thieves. In other words, we're stereotyping African Americans so that some may be seen to be cool and successful but the rest are up to no good.

HOST: Thank you all for your answers. Now, it's time for our audience to determine who is **SPEAKING THE TRUTH?**

- Is it Celebrity #1? (wait)
- Celebrity #2? (wait)]
- Or Celebrity #3? (*wait*)
- Will the celebrity who is *SPEAKING THE TRUTH* please stand up!

CELEBRITIES 1, 2, &3: (*all pretend to stand up, until, finally, **Celebrity** # 3 stands all the way up*)

HOST: Let's have a big hand for Celebrity #3.

Host: Now audience, let's begin **ROUND NUMBER FOUR:** Does television viewing encourage drug or alcohol use? Let's hear from Celebrity #1.

CELEBRITY #1: Oh, of course not. People are always blaming TV for everything. What makes you think that when you see drug use on TV that someone's going to want to do that?

CELEBRITY #2: I disagree. TV definitely influences kids' attitudes about drug and alcohol usage. My teacher told me about a study done by John Condry, a professor at Cornell University that found:

- In 36 hours of television, there were 149 messages related to drugs or alcohol **with more than 80% pro drug and alcohol**. For example, beer commercials makes it look like drinking beer makes a person more sexy, more popular and life more fun!

CELEBRITY #3: I agree with Celebrity #1. I love the Budweiser ads but they sure don't make me want to go hang out in a bar. I'd rather hang out with my friends at their homes.

HOST: Thank you, Celebrity #3. Audience, again, which celebrity is **SPEAKING THE TRUTH**.

- Is it Celebrity #1? (*wait*)
- Celebrity #2? (*wait*)
- Or Celebrity #3? (*wait*)
- Will the celebrity who is **SPEAKING THE TRUTH** please stand up!

CELEBRITIES 1, 2, &3: (*all pretend to stand up, until, finally, **CELEBRITY #2** stands all the way up.*)

HOST: Let's have some applause for Celebrity #2.

- Before we finish, I'd like to ask our Celebrities to share with the kids in our audience what they can do to make better choices about what they watch and listen to.

CELEBRITY #1.

- Remember, you are what you watch! Well, not completely . . . but, the media you feed your mind affect you as much as the food you feed your body.

CELEBRITY #2: For every hour you watch TV, spend an hour doing either an outdoor or indoor activity. Don't become a couch spud!

CELEBRITY #3: Not all media are bad. There are lots of good programs . . . programs that teach, inspire, and entertain without violence or put-downs.

HOST:

- Thank you all for participating today. We have learned a lot about how TV affects us and presented some great ideas that are useful to everyone.
- Audience, how about a final big round of applause for the hardest-working celebrity guest panel I've ever known! (*wait*) Thanks everyone.

Sources for information:

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