**Age:** 4 and older

**Number of players:** 2 or more

**Materials:**

3 clear drinking glasses, water, chlorine bleach, food coloring (any color except yellow)

Before you begin, practice so you can know how many drops of food coloring and spoons of bleach will be needed to restore the glass of water to almost clear.

Introduction / Explanation

Before you begin, fill two glasses about two-thirds full of water. Fill the third glass about half full of chlorine bleach, but do it beforehand so no one sees what it is. Show the two glasses of water and tell everyone that they represent two friends. You can give them names of people in the group or assign them silly names.

For younger children, tell a story about two friends, making it up as you go. For older children, you can also use a story, but make the examples age-appropriate. I'll use the example of Patrick and Mike.

"For the most part, Patrick tries to obey his parents, and generally does the right things, but Mike always seems to be getting into trouble. Patrick walks quickly to school, but Mike dawdles and throws rocks and sticks as he saunters through the neighborhood One day Mike threw a rock and accidentally broke a house window. He ran on to school and never told anyone about it." Continue with the story, adding several more instances of Mike's lying to his parents, stealing a five-dollar bill, cheating on a test at school, and so forth.

As you relate the story, add one drop of food coloring to Mike's glass teach time he does something wrong or dishonest. Do not stir it, just let it slowly dissipate in the water.

Point out that the first time Mike did something dishonest, the color did not affect too much of the water, but each time he did something wrong, "he" became darker and cloudier, the "stain" finally permeating his entire being, filling him with guilt. Meanwhile, Patrick's glass remains clean and pure.

"Eventually, Mike felt miserable. His friends did not want to be with him because he constantly got involved in dangerous and foolish activities. He soon felt entangled in all his lies, and disliked himself more and more. After a serious talk with the school principal, he decided he needed to change his ways. First he went to the neighbor whose window he had broken, apologized, and offered to pay for the repair."

As you tell this part of the story, pour a little bleach (about a teaspoon) into Mike's glass. Keep adding to the story by relating examples of how Mike repented of his ways and started being more honest, repaying and apologizing to the people whom he had offended. With each honorable act, pour in a little bleach. Those watching might think you are just adding more water to Mike's glass, and they will be amazed as the colored water starts to fade. Eventually it will be almost completely clear.

The whole scenario can be adapted for older children and even teenagers and adults, just by making the story elements more appropriate to their age.

There are many things that can come out of this activity. It can lead to lots of questons and interesting discussions with small children, and can be extremely thought-provoking on a more sophisticated level. Here are a few ideas for discussions.

1. If we had poured only one drop of color into the water (if Mike had been dishonest only once) how much bleach (his attempt to change for the good) would have been needed to clear it up? The sooner you clear up a lie or act of dishonesty, the better. The darker the water, the more drops of bleach (the more reparations and apologies) it takes to make it clear.

2. How do the "Mike" and "Patrick" water glasses differ now? (Patrick's water is completely clear while Mike's water is slightly discolored.) What does that tell us about the effects of dishonesty in our lives?

3. What about forgiveness? Should the people whom Mike offended forgive him? Should they try to punish him further for his lying? If so, what would be the point? If not, why not? Will they be able to trust him from now on? What enables you to trust someone?

4. How do you think Mike feels about himself now? Which way do you think he was happier? What is the difference between short-term happiness (being able to buy something with the five dollars he stole or getting a good grade on a test on which he cheated) and long-term happiness?

5. What are the steps a person needs to go through to make amends for an act of dishonest?

(1) Recognize you have done something wrong

(2) Repair the relationship - apologize to the person you offended

(3) Restore what you have damaged

(4) Resolve not to do it again