



Shoplifting is Stealing!

An important message to thoughtful teen-agers and parents!

Did you know? . . .

Shoplifting is stealing, and stealing is a criminal act. So-called high spirited "fun" and youthful "pranks" can cause young people a lifetime of trouble. Too many teen-agers are unaware of the serious harm that a criminal record, even for what might seem to be a petty violation, can do to their lives and futures.

Even if the punishment does not include a jail sentence, the criminal record remains; and it says "Thief".

Why do teen-agers shoplift?

Across the country young people, many from middle and upper income families, are pilfering merchandise. Why do teen-agers commit a criminal act that will probably result in arrest and jeopardize their futures? The common answers are:

"I did it for kicks"

"It was just a prank"

"I did it on a dare"

"It was part of an initiation"

In other words they think it's more a sport than a crime . . . But the law makes no provision for a "sport". Shoplifting is stealing and stealing is a criminal act. The shoplifter is a thief, not a prankster.

Never break the law on a dare — It takes more courage to turn down a dare than to accept it, and your friends know this. In the long run they will respect you for sticking to your beliefs. Don't fall for that "chicken" routine.

Why didn't someone tell me?

Many young people when arrested for shoplifting say, "Why didn't someone tell me that shoplifting was a crime?" Ignorance of the law is no excuse and no defence against prosecution and conviction.

Shoplifting is stealing and stealing is a criminal act. Stealing a \$2 pen is the same as stealing \$2 from a cash register or from someone's pocket — it's a crime.

"But the store won't miss it"

Some teen-agers seem to think that stores make a lot of money and won't miss a book, or a record, or a blouse or a belt.

But the fact is they do miss it, and they know they are losing more to shoplifting each year. They are losing merchandise that has

been bought and paid for by the store and taking it is stealing. If something that belonged to you were stolen, it would be a great loss; so it is with a store.

Stores getting tough!

Because of this growing problem stores are getting tough with shoplifters and are taking measures to catch them in the act. Stores are no longer letting teen-age shoplifters off with a lecture and a warning. They are turning them over to the authorities. Store managements are becoming convinced that the proper way to deal with young shoplifters and their parents is through the police and the courts.

"But I'm a juvenile! Nothing can happen to me"

Don't you believe it. True, the identity of a juvenile who commits a crime is not made public but an offence is still an offence. One shoplifting conviction can ruin your life.

Furthermore, the Juvenile Courts have the power to transfer juvenile offenders to Adult Court, where young people are treated like adult criminals and can be given jail sentences — and often are.

The Juvenile Courts have the power to take you out of your home and send you to training school.

"But it was just for kicks"

Those "kicks" can come back and haunt you forever. A minor record easily becomes a major problem. Many job applications ask "Were you ever arrested?" and many employers don't hire people with criminal records.

A job that requires bonding, even that of a stock boy, will probably be closed to the youth with a record. He may also be turned down for government jobs at the Federal, Provincial or Municipal level.

With a criminal record it can be difficult, in some cases impossible, to go into any business or profession where a licence is required, such as law, real estate, or insurance.

A criminal record can keep you out of the college or professional school of your choice. A stolen carton of candy kept one boy out of college — and a girl was denied entry to law school because of a stolen swimsuit. You can also be denied admission to a foreign country because of a criminal record.

What can the law do about it?

You can be arrested if you steal any property from a store, no matter how little it costs. It is a crime if you steal even a lipstick or a candy bar.

Punishment for a first offence can be as much as two years in jail or for theft over \$200.00, as much as ten years — shoplifting is theft and theft is an indictable offence and is punishable as such.

How do I hide an arrest from my parents?

You cannot — even a guilty plea would not help. Once you are arrested for shoplifting your parents must be notified before you can be dealt with in the courts.

What can parents do about it?

1. Be aware that "shoplifting" can be just the beginning of bigger trouble for children.
2. Make sure children understand that shoplifting is stealing and stealing is a criminal act.
3. Be certain that your children know what a criminal record can do to their chances for jobs, colleges, and professions.
4. Know how much money they have and how they spend it.
5. Know what your son or daughter brings into the house. If it isn't his or hers, check on where it came from. Don't accept a pat answer.
6. Know when, where, and why your child is going shopping.
7. Find out what the community is doing about the problem, and lend your help.
8. Teach your child that it is more "chicken" to go along with the crowd than to refuse to do so.
9. Be alert to a daughter who repeatedly goes shopping with an extra large handbag or shopping bag. These are common tools of a shoplifter.
10. Supervise any "clothes" swapping.
11. Set the right example.

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