



Hardy Truehopper and the Long, Long Carrot

A Discussion and Activity Guide for Grownups

The free companion to the book, for parents, teachers, and school counselors. Print it, fold it into the book, and use it in five minute pieces. No lecture required.

How to use this guide

- **Little and often beats long and once.** One question at bedtime is worth more than ten in a row.
- **Wonder together, don't quiz.** "I wonder why..." works better than "What's the lesson?"
- **There are no wrong answers here.** If your child says "I would have said the second carrot too," that's not failure. That's honesty, and it's exactly where Hardy started.

The science in 60 seconds

In the 1950s, psychologist Solomon Asch gave people an easy task. They had to match a line to one of three others. The catch was this. Everyone else in the room was secretly told to give the same wrong answer, confidently, before the real participant had a turn. About three out of four people went along with the group at least once, against the plain evidence of their own eyes.

Two hopeful findings hide inside that result, and they are the heart of this book.

1. **A group's mistake only holds while it is unanimous.** One honest voice weakens the spell for everyone. Hardy plays that part, the hardest one.

2. **Truth gets easier once it has company.** When one ally answered honestly, the conformity collapsed. Mouse plays that part, and being *second* to speak up counts too.

Before you read (30 seconds)

- "This is a story about a rabbit who sees something with his own two eyes, and everyone disagrees with him. What do you think he'll do?"

While you read, three places to pause

1. **When Squirrel announces her answer** (and Duck and Hedgehog agree). Ask, "*Look at the carrots. Which one looks longest to YOU?*" Let your child judge before Hardy does. They are now inside the experiment.
2. **When the sly voice whispers to Hardy.** Ask, "*What is the voice telling him to do? Why would it say that?*"
3. **When Hardy says 'The second one' in a tiny voice.** Ask, "*How do you think his tummy feels right now?*"

After you read

For ages 3 to 5

- Which carrot was really the longest? How did you know?
- Why did Hardy say the wrong one, even though he could see?
- How did Hardy feel after he told the truth?
- Who helped Hardy? (Here is a hint. Someone very small.)

For ages 6 to 8

- Why did all the animals copy Squirrel when the answer was easy to see?
- Hardy got it wrong first, and then fixed it. Is it ever too late to tell the truth?
- Mouse said, "I saw it too... I was just too scared to speak first." Have you ever felt like Mouse? What would have helped?
- The animals laughed at Hardy and he stayed anyway. Has anyone ever laughed at you for being different? What helped?
- Squirrel said sorry "almost in a growl." Why is it hard to admit being wrong, even for grownups?

Name the sly voice

In this book, the pull to copy the crowd has a name, and things with names are easier to catch. When you spot it in real life, yours or theirs, say it out loud, lightly.

| "Ooh, was that the **sly voice** just then?"

Then stop, take one breath together, and ask the two Hardy questions.

| "What do I really see?"
| "What do I really think?"

A tip for grownups. Catch the sly voice in *yourself* first, out loud. "I almost ordered what everyone else ordered. Sly voice!" Children copy what we model far faster than what we explain.

The Look Again Rule (important!)

The lesson of this book is **not** "always disagree with the group." That makes a stubborn contrarian, the child who refuses a coat because the cold was everyone else's idea.

The brave thing is to **look again**. Often your child will look and find the group is right, and that is a fine, honest answer. The courage is in the looking, not the disagreeing.

Activity 1. The Carrot Game (a gentle Asch experiment at home)

Ages 4 and up. Two grownups, or a grownup and an older sibling. 5 minutes.

1. Draw three "carrots" (or lines) on paper, with one clearly longest.
2. Secretly agree with your helper to both pick a wrong one, cheerfully and confidently.
3. Ask everyone in turn which is longest, and let your child go last.
4. **Whatever they answer, reveal the game immediately.** "We were playing the sly voice game! We said the wrong one on purpose!"
5. Laugh about it, then talk. "Did you start to doubt your eyes when we both said the same thing? That's exactly what happened to Hardy!"

Three rules. Always reveal the trick right away, keep it silly not serious, and end on the same line every time. "*Your eyes were right. They usually are when you*

really look." One round is plenty.

Activity 2. Draw your sly voice

Ask your child to draw what the sly voice might look like. Smoke? A shadow? A silly worm? Giving it a face makes it smaller. (Then draw your own, and theirs will be better.)

Activity 3. My brave voice

Practice Hardy's line together in a big voice, a tiny voice, a robot voice, and a whisper.

| ***"I see what I see."***

A child who has said the words out loud in play can find them again under pressure.

Activity 4. Family stories

Tell your child about a time *you* went along with the crowd and wished you hadn't. Keep it small and true, a meeting, a menu, a haircut everyone praised. Then tell about a time you spoke up. Children are astonished and delighted to learn the sly voice whispers to grownups too.

Real life moments to catch

- **The copied opinion.** Your child says "Everyone says that film is boring." You could ask, *"What did YOUR eyes think when you watched it?"*
- **The playground pile on.** Your child says "Nobody plays with him because he's weird." You could ask, *"Hmm, is that what you see, or what everyone says? What do you actually know about him?"*
- **The wobble after speaking up.** When your child holds an unpopular but correct or kind position and wavers, you could say, *"You looked with your own two eyes. I'm proud of the looking, whatever you decide."*

Coloring pages

Print the following pages for small hands while you talk.

- Coloring page 1. Hardy waving in the meadow.
- Coloring page 2. The whole meadow gathers to judge the three carrots.

- Coloring page 3. Hardy holds firm while the others laugh.
- Coloring page 4. The animals planting the Champion carrot together.

Enjoying Hardy?

- **A short review on Amazon helps other families find him.** It takes one minute and means the world to a small book. **hardytruehopper.com/review**
- **Hardy's next adventure is coming.** One big idea about thinking clearly per book, sized for bedtime. Be first to hear at **hardytruehopper.com**

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