

## What to do About Lying

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A new survey shows that the average adult tells four lies a day, or 1,460 lies a year. Is it any wonder that our children tell fibs, too?

Yet chances are when your child tells a whopper, it makes you mad.

Why do kids lie?

Kids lie for lots of reasons. One of the biggest reasons is to avoid punishment. After all, what child likes being grounded or losing privileges?

A wonderful mom I work with shared a story about a time her child lied. Her son was in math class taking a big test. When the test was handed out her child also received the answer grid! Her child decided to copy the answers. Later, when the teacher confronted him, he lied and said he had not cheated.

Her son was a good student who hadn't been in trouble before. In fact, he admired his math teacher. He lied not only to try and escape punishment, but also because he was embarrassed and worried what his teacher would think of him. Sometimes kids lie to avoid disappointing adults they care about.

Other times, kids will lie to side-step a sticky situation or perhaps to get attention. Sometimes kids tell lies to elevate their social standing among peers or to gain an advantage. Other times, a child may feel threatened, insecure or guilty.

So, what should you do when your child lies?

One solution is to tell kids who have done something wrong, "You're going to receive one consequence for the bad choice you just made, but if you lie to me about it, you're going to receive two consequences." Normally, this approach will inspire children to tell the truth. When they do tell you the truth, then praise them for taking responsibility for their actions and tell them how much you value honesty.

If you sense that the child is feeling threatened, insecure, guilty or embarrassed, you can talk with the child about those feelings by saying, "You seem kind of embarrassed. Tell me more."

You can also say, "That's not how it happened. I need you to tell me the truth."

Sometimes you may inadvertently be setting your child up to lie. Let's say that you know that your child just broke your favorite vase and you ask the child, "Did you break that vase?" Chances are that the child will lie to avoid the Punishment and save face. Instead, you could say,

“I see that the vase is broken” and then take steps to clean Up the mess, determine a consequence, etc. but the focus of the interaction is on SOLUTIONS rather than BLAME.

Or, you can take T. Berry Brazelton’s advice. He urges parents to stay calm and say, “We both know that what you said isn’t true. You don’t need to lie. I can stand the truth and so can you.”

And let’s not forget that you are your child’s role model. Perhaps parents can work on lying fewer than 1,460 times per year!

**Byline:** Toni Schutta is a Parent Coach and Licensed Psychologist with 17 years experience helping families find solutions that work. To receive the **free report “The 7 Worst Mistakes Parents Make (and How to Avoid Them!)** visit <http://www.getparentinghelpnow.com/7mistakessignup.html>. Toni also offers a complimentary 30-minute “Happier Family for You” Planning Session, that’s done by telephone, at your convenience. Please contact Toni at [toni@getparentinghelpnow.com](mailto:toni@getparentinghelpnow.com) to set up your session.