



## Lying



### WHY DO PEOPLE LIE ?

According to childhood development experts, lying is a normal part of development and people start to explore lying around the age of 2. There are numerous reasons why someone lies, some of the which include:

- To test out a new behaviour
- To enhance self-esteem
- To protect privacy (common for teens)
- To avoid others worrying about them
- To gain approval or avoid disappointing someone
- To get the focus off themselves
- To avoid punishment or consequences
- Speaking before they think (common with young people with ADD, ADHD)
- Younger children don't understand the difference between real and make-believe



FACTS

MYTHS





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### WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

Building up trust takes time, consistency and repetition. There is no quick fix for lying, but all of the efforts you put in are worth the investment in the long run.

Develop and maintain a relationship with open communication that is supportive and non-judgmental with the young person, so the young person is more likely to be open and honest with you, without fear of judgement.

Teach younger kids about the benefits of honesty, and the consequences that lying can lead to.

Be supportive and curious and try to understand the reason behind the lying - talk about those issues with the young person and support them in finding possible solutions. Try to keep your own personal emotions out of it.

If lying becomes a bigger problem or is involving risky or dangerous behaviours/situations (like substance use, stealing or lies to intentionally hurt someone), seek the support of a counsellor or mental health professional.





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### 7 STEPS TO TRUTH TELLING



#### Stay Calm and Support On

(problem-solve instead of punish)

Don't yell, stay calm and supportive to show the young person you are able to handle whatever it is. Be supportive, curious and calm in helping them problem solve and come up with a solution. This demonstrates that you care and that you are on their side.



#### Don't Set Up a Lie

When you know the truth, start with naming that instead of giving opportunity to lie, instead find ways to empathize and focus on a solution. ("What are your plans for finishing up your homework?", "What can we do to clean this up and make sure it doesn't happen next time?") This can help you avoid a power struggle, help the young person save-face and teach them problem-solving skills by focusing on solutions, which may help them avoid a future lie.



#### Get the Whole Truth

Instead of jumping to accusations, blame or punishment, show empathy, compassion and curiosity in trying to understand what's behind the young person feeling like they had to lie. ("That sounds like a story to me. You must be worried about something and afraid to tell the truth. Let's talk about that. What would help you be honest?")





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# 7 STEPS TO TRUTH TELLING



### Celebrate Honesty the Young Person Does Demonstrate

Even when the truth is hard to hear or frustrating or scary, it's important to affirm the young person for being brave in being honest so they are more likely to trust you in the future. *"I really appreciate you telling me what really happened. That must have been difficult for you, but I really appreciate and respect you telling the truth and taking responsibility."*



### Delight In Do-overs

Everyone makes mistakes and it's an important part of learning how to make better choices, so turn the lie/mistake into a learning opportunity. *"If you could have a do-over, what would you do differently?"*



### Show Love

Let your young person know that you love them unconditionally, and although you don't like their poor behaviour or decision, you don't love them less because of it. Young people need to feel loved and safe to come to you with problems, mistakes, lies and support with solutions.



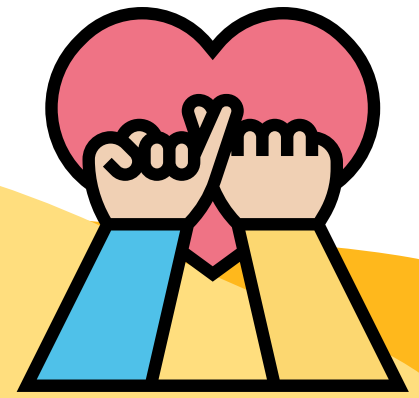
### Walk the Talk

You are a role-model and young people learn from and will mimic our behaviour. Although *"little white lies"* may seem harmless, it is projecting that it's okay to lie. If you do lie, model accountability in owning up to it, acknowledging that it was wrong and how to find a solution.





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### MORE INSIGHTS INTO LYING

If lying is coming from a place of lack of confidence or to get attention, it can be helpful to use planned ignoring and gentle redirecting to something that is more factual. (E.g., *"It's okay that you didn't get the top score at the competition. Tell more about what aspects of your performance you felt proud of."* Or *"What you were telling me was really interesting, but then it seemed like you started to add things to it that weren't true. That got in the way of seeing how you really are becoming so mature. Can you tell me why you decided to do that?"*)

With bigger lies or lies that carry more negative consequences, explore with the young person about why they felt they had to lie, be supportive, but clear with repercussions that match the severity of the lie, yet short-lived to give the young person an opportunity to practice better behaviours. It can be more productive in discouraging future lying if you come up with a consequence for the thing they were lying about. (E.g., taking phone or screen time away until they complete their homework or writing an apology letter to a peer they hit.) It is important to support the young person in strategizing a plan of action and sometimes in initiating it. It can also be helpful to follow up with the young person about how it went after and praise their efforts for being honest and correcting any actions.





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### MORE INSIGHTS INTO LYING

For "tall tale" lies, it's helpful to call it out in a neutral way and offer and encourage opportunity to be truthful. (Eg. "Hey, this sounds like a tall tale, why don't you try again and tell me what really happened?")

You can use a "truth check" – When you know a child has lied about something, you could say, "I'm going to walk away and give you 10 minutes and then I'm going to come back and ask you again. If you change your mind and want to give me a different answer, it's just a truth check and you won't get in trouble."

Use a preamble method. Set your young person up to tell the truth by letting them know you don't expect perfection. People often lie out of fear of disappointing someone. (E.g., "I'm going to ask you a question and maybe you're going to tell me something I don't really want to hear. But remember, your behaviour is not who you are. I love you no matter what, and sometimes people make mistakes. So, I want you to think about giving me an honest answer and we can problem solve together.")





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# WHAT NOT TO DO



**Don't take it personally.** Having your personal emotions take over will draw attention away from understanding what is under the lying and your emotional reaction won't encourage honesty. Try to stay calm, compassionate, supportive, and curious to prove to the young person that you are investing in understanding where they are coming from and it's safe to be honest with you.

**Don't call/label the young person a liar,** as it will cause more hurt and make your child think you don't trust them. This will interfere with working through the lie and being able to support them in the underlying issue.

**Don't corner your child to set them up to lie or be caught in a lie.**

Instead, go right to the issue and discuss it. (Example: Instead of asking a child if they didn't do their homework, you could say, "I know you didn't do it. Let's talk about why that's not a good idea.")

**Prioritize having an open conversation about it, as opposed to jumping to a punishment,** which can possibly encourage future lying to avoid punishment. Make sure that the consequence appropriately relates to the situation and relates to the level of severity of the lie. (Example: Lying about completing homework may lead to reduced screen time to be able to finish the homework.)