

## Lying

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LYING. IT'S SOMETHING POLITICIANS ARE OFTEN ACCUSED OF DOING, SOMETHING MOST ADULTS DO AT SOMETIME IN THE FORM OF A 'LITTLE WHITE LIE' AND SOMETHING WE DON'T WANT CHILDREN TO DO. WHY? BECAUSE LYING UNDERMINES TRUST.

However, we need to understand that preschool children will often tell stories without intending to tell lies. Preschoolers sometimes mix up reality and fantasy. By primary school however, we expect children will know the difference between truth and fantasy.

So why would your child lie?

- If a child tells the truth and believes they will be severely or unfairly punished, they may avoid punishment by lying.
- If children see others getting away with lying, they may be tempted to try it themselves.

- Your child may tell stories to other children to be seen as 'cool'. Children who tell boastful lies may also be lonely, bored, or have low self-esteem.

So how do you know if your child is lying? Younger children sometimes give the game away themselves. They may tell a story that just doesn't sound right, or break into a smile as their plot unravels.

*“If a child tells the truth and believes they will be severely or unfairly punished, they may avoid punishment by lying.”*

A few simple questions can also help reveal a lie. For example, asking how your child came to have \$10 in their pocket might include some calm, clear questions about when, where, who was with them, or the order of events.

To discourage lying parents need to discuss the problem with their children. It's important your child knows that lying is unacceptable, and the effects of telling lies. You could briefly and calmly tell your child how lying affects you and why you think it is a problem. For example: Tania, I feel angry and disappointed when you lie. It makes it hard to believe anything you say, If you keep telling lies you will find that nobody will trust you.

Give your child opportunities to be honest and praise them for telling the truth. Your positive response to their behaviour will encourage them to repeat their honesty in future. Try telling them you will give them opportunities to be honest and try it out occasionally. For example, if you know they haven't yet tidied their room, ask them. You will know straight away whether they are being honest.

If your child is finding it hard not to tell lies, you might need to set up a written contract signed by you and your child. This contract should state what you expect your child to do and the rewards

and consequences that will follow. Put the contract up on the fridge to avoid getting into a debate with your child. If they have lied, the consequences for that behaviour are clearly listed in the contract.

As your child learns to not lie, you will no longer need a written contract as you and your child will have established a more permanent contract of trust.

**Parenting Tip:** If your child owns up to doing something they know you would not have allowed them to do make sure you praise them for their honesty, before you deal with the misbehaviour. No matter what else has happened they should be rewarded for telling the truth.

**Find more parenting tips at: [manitoba.ca/triplep](http://manitoba.ca/triplep) or call 945-4777 in Winnipeg or toll-free 1-877-945-4777.**

Professor Matt Sanders is founder of the Triple P - Positive Parenting Program.

