

Lying

Why do children lie?

Children commonly lie to try to escape punishment. Hence the saying, "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies." These are called self-protective lies. During the first 5 or 6 years of life, children go through a normal phase of trying to cover up by lying. They stop lying when they learn it doesn't convince anyone.

How can I help my child stop lying?

The Rule

"Don't lie. Tell me the truth."

Discipline technique

If your child lies, respond as follows:

- Punish your child based on the available evidence. For example, if a dish is broken and your child has just been in the kitchen, you don't need Sherlock Holmes. Don't ask your child what happened when you already know what he did. Children aren't good at confessing.
- For misbehavior without any evidence (e.g., you think your child watched a TV show you told her not to), overlook it. Trying to investigate it will just bring you grief.
- When you confront your child about misbehavior and she spontaneously denies she had anything to do with it, show your disapproval. Tell her, "I really feel badly when you lie to me and I hope you'll tell me the truth next time." If she lies about her misbehavior, give her a double time-out (i.e., 2 minutes per year of age instead of 1 minute per year). Make it clear that her time-out would be not be as long if she had not lied about her behavior.
- Don't try to catch your child in a lie or make her confess. These just lead to bigger and better lies.

Praise

Praise your child for telling the truth.

Model

Be truthful yourself and lie as little as possible (including tactful lies).

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