



# Lying Summary

---

## Why Lying?

Trust is an essential foundation for healthy relationships. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship, and understanding how to promote a trusting relationship with your child, one in which they tell you and others the truth, is key.

### Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *“Who do you trust and why?”*
- *“What’s important to you about honesty?”*
- *“When are you tempted to lie?”*
- *“What’s the worst thing that could happen if you tell the truth about a misbehavior?”*

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

**Tip** Understand your child’s development. All kids need to test limits and at times, break rules to learn them. Focus on teaching how to be truthful.

### Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Model honesty. Modeling honesty can mean sharing aloud what you might be thinking when you are saying how you feel: *“I am tempted to say I feel fine, but the truth is that I am upset about a conversation I had at work.”*
- Detect lying with others. Learning about why and how others lie can help children learn about their own lying.
- Learn about how your child morally develops (see full tool). Understanding their stage will help you offer language and support to teach from their perspective.
- Teach positive behaviors when you identify misbehaviors. Children are most tempted to lie when they make a poor choice or mistake. Consider: *“What positive behavior can I teach my child to replace what I’ve told them not to do?”*
- Discuss the value of truth. At a family meal, share a personal story about how trust between family members has been critical to an important situation. Consider: *“How do you come up with alternative solutions when you are tempted to lie?”*

**Tip** Play the game *Two Truths and a Lie* where a person offers three simple statements, one of which is a lie to see if the other can guess which one is false. Learn first together about body language signals that reveal a lie.

**Trap** Children who fear punishment when they misbehave are prone to lie to cover up their mistakes. Part of our modeling as parents requires learning more about how to teach responsibility and self-discipline through alternative strategies.

### Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me…” statements like “*Show me how you can tell about a mistake you made. Mistakes are part of learning.*”
- Follow up when your child lies to help repair trust: “*How can you show your sister that you care about her and will not lie to her again?*”
- Recognize effort: “*I notice how you told me when you broke the vase. I appreciate your honesty!*”
- Proactively remind: “*Remember, we tell the truth even when we make mistakes, and then we’ll figure out the rest together.*”

**Tip** The best way to turnaround a misbehavior is by recognizing when and how your child makes good choices and acts positively in similar circumstances. Children need to learn what to do as well as what not to do.

**Tip** Discuss characters in stories. Courage to be true to self is a universal theme that is used in literature time and again. Find these heroes, particularly those who are flawed. Point out their faults, and then learn together how they triumph. Be sure to discuss how the conquering hero has to make choices that do not align with what others want.

### Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions: “*How do you feel about making that decision?*” or “*What does your heart or inner voice tell you?*” or “*What are some options if you break a rule?*”
- Reflect on outcomes: “*Remember when you broke your Grandma’s glasses? You told her you were sorry. She said she knew it was an accident. It was all okay, and we appreciated your honesty.*”
- Stay engaged. Ask yourself if you need to reteach or make changes.
- Engage in further practice. Role play or rehearse when needed.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair trust when needed.

### Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: “*I notice you told me when you forgot your scarf at Mitchell’s. I appreciate you telling me.*”
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Consider a hug when the routine is accomplished.

**Tip** Be specific. “Good job” seems not to carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior - “*You admitted when you were wrong, and I know how hard that can be!*” - can promote more of the same.

**Trap** Avoid stickers, gifts, or other physical rewards for performance. These actually have a demotivating effect on children. When you remove the candy, for example, have they internalized the skills and also the sense of responsibility for performing them? There’s less of a chance if you’ve offered a “bribe.” Particularly with the issue of honesty, you want your child to internalize the importance of telling the truth. Focus on your attention as the best reward.

**Celebrate yourself** for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your child’s success today and in their future!

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2019). *Lying Summary. Ages 5-10*. Retrieved from <https://www.ParentingMontana.org>.