



Lying Summary

Why Lying?

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

Tip These steps are done best when you and your teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- “Who do you trust and why?”
- “What’s important to you about honesty?”
- “Have you ever been lied to? How did it feel?”
- “When are you tempted to lie?”
- “How do you feel when you get away with a lie? How do you feel when you get caught in a lie?”
- “What’s the worst thing that could happen if you tell the truth about a misbehavior?”

Tip Teens don’t want to be in the spotlight, and questions can feel like an interrogation. So, look for comfortable windows of opportunity to introduce the questions. For example, is your teen telling you about a friend who lied to her parents? Or, are you watching someone lie on a reality television show together? Those are ideal moments to move into these kinds of conversations.

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

- Model honesty. Modeling honesty could be sharing aloud what you are thinking when you are saying how you feel. *“I am tempted to say that I feel just fine in response to your ‘How are you?’ But, the truth is that I am upset about a conversation I had at work, and I can’t seem to get it off my mind.”*
- Teach your teen to take a breath before answering. It gives your teen a moment to allow their thinking brain to catch up with their reactive/emotional brain and allows them the opportunity to share a more honest response.
- Help set your teen up for success by asking the right questions. Instead of *“Did you do this?”* ask, *“Tell me what happened?”*

- Talk with your teen about the impact of their lies on you. You could say, *“I am sad that there is something about our relationship that isn’t safe enough that you feel you need to lie to me.”*
- Ask your teen about the lie they just told. You might say, *“What happened just now that made you lie to me?”*
- Catch your teen telling you the truth, particularly when it is difficult for them. You can say, *“I know it was hard to tell me the truth, and I appreciate you being honest.”*
- Talk about trust and how it is built slowly but can be broken quickly.
- Learn about moral development.
- Teach positive behaviors when you identify misbehaviors. Consider the question: “What positive behavior can I teach my teen to replace what I’ve told them not to do?”
- At a family meal, share a personal story about how trust between family members has been critical in a safety or other important situation. Talk about how you come up with alternative solutions when you are tempted to lie.

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

Trap Teens who are left alone frequently and whose needs are neglected often turn to lying to find attention, take unhealthy risks, and meet their needs in ways that can be self-destructive and potentially destructive of others.

Tip and Trap Moving forward in development is a human need. But, parents or other influencers in a teen’s life can halt development through fear, guilt, or shame. These teens are the most at risk for depression, anxiety, and suicide. Parents who offer support, understanding of development, and independence within boundaries balanced with taking responsibility for actions ensure that a teen moves forward in their development.

Step 3. Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use *“I’d love to hear…”* statements like, *“I imagine that there’s a part of you that is worried about getting into trouble, so I would love to see you take a risk and try truthfully telling me what happened.”*
- Recognize effort. *“I notice how you told me when you went to the movies with your friends instead of staying at your friend’s house. I appreciate your honesty!”*
- Focus on the logical consequences of dishonesty. If your teen lies about where they are, show them the logical consequences.
- Discuss characters in stories. Point out their faults and frailties, 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.
- Proactively remind. Often parents have a sense of when a teen is tempted to lie. Just before they do, you may whisper in your teen’s ear, *“Remember to tell the truth even when you make mistakes, and then we’ll figure out the rest together.”*

Tip The best way to turn around misbehavior is by recognizing when and how your teen makes good choices and acts positively in similar circumstances. Teens need to learn what to do as well as what not to do.

Step 4. **Support** Your Teen'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?"*
- Learn about development. Each new age and stage will present different social challenges.
- Reflect on outcomes. *"Remember when you broke the neighbor's lawn chair? You told her you were sorry, and she said she knew it was an accident and had it repaired. 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. Create more opportunities to practice when all is calm.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair trust when needed.

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

- Notice! *"I noticed you told me when you forgot your laptop at school. I appreciate you telling me."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Encourage opportunities for fun and further connection.

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