

Supporting children to tell the truth

When children often tell lies, it can be difficult for parents to trust them. Parents may find it hard to believe their children even when they are telling the truth. Telling lies can also cause problems with friends and their family members. Children need to learn that no matter what they have done, they must tell the truth. It is best to deal with lying as soon as it starts.

Children lie for many reasons. They may lie to avoid the consequences of something they have done, such as doing something they know their parents would not let them do. Also if children do not get any benefits for telling the truth, they may lie instead. Children may learn to lie from watching their parents or other children tell lies. If they see others appearing to benefit from lying, they are likely to copy them.

A helpful strategy to use when you have a problem with your child lying is to talk to them about it. Don't talk about it immediately after they have told you a lie but when things are calm. Be sure that they understand that lying means deliberately saying something that is not true. *"Fred, I feel angry and disappointed when you lie. It makes it hard to believe anything you say. If you continue to tell lies you'll find that nobody will trust you."* Ask your child why they felt they needed to lie. Simply tell them that you want them to tell the truth from now on.

Set up some opportunities for your child to tell the truth. Ask them questions that you know the answer to such as *"have you put those toys away yet?"* You can then use these opportunities to acknowledge that they are telling the truth, by giving them some praise.

If your child continues to lie then you need to use a consequence. Deal with the lying first, then the problem that led to the lie and provide an appropriate consequence for both. *"Fred, you are not telling me the truth about how the lamp got broken in your room. You cannot watch television tonight because you lied. You will need to put some of your own money towards having it fixed."* Keep to the agreement; you may need to use consequences a number of times before your child learns to tell the truth.

Happy parenting