

# But It's True!

Why telling lies at this stage may increase and how to deal with it

BY MICHELLE ANTHONY, M.A., Ph.D.

**C**ATCH YOUR kid in a fib? Don't worry; it's normal at this age. Beyond that, it's actually a sign of ordinary mental development! In order to lie, children have to understand that their statement is false. Since preschoolers lack this ability, their "lies" are usually limited to fantasy. Around age 7 or 8, as children's conversational skills develop, they learn to anticipate the impact of their words, which enables them to lie.

Children lie for various reasons, but most often it's to change the result of a situation to their desired outcome. Although sevens and eights know they are intentionally deceiving others, it's generally not done with malicious intent. For example, children may claim that they met a famous person to increase their self-esteem or social standing. They may also be dishonest to evade punishment, avoid responsibility,

or gain a reward. Children also lie because they now have an increased understanding of rules and expectations, and they have inner conflict over not meeting your or their own internal notions of acceptable or desired behaviors.

When you find your child has lied, use his newfound intellectual abilities to your advantage. For example, help him realize how the lie made things worse by emphasizing the privileges he gets when he is *truthful*, such as being able to do homework in his room because you trust him to work. Then, make the consequences related: He still has to do the homework he lied about finishing, but now he has to do it in the kitchen where you can observe.

Hold your child accountable for his deception, but be sure to respond calmly. Some children lie to avoid anger even more than to avoid punishment. Think about providing "amnesty" for honesty to emphasize your desire for the truth. Make sure you also pay close attention to what your child is saying. You can learn a lot from his words, even his lies. **P&C**

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MICHELLE ANTHONY, M.A., Ph.D., is co-author of *Little Girls Can Be Mean*. She is an expert in developmental psychology, a mother to three young children, and a certified K-3 teacher.