

Dear Counselling Corner:

I am embarrassed that I am writing about this. I have caught my child lying lately and I don't know why or what to do about it. I have always tried my best to raise my children properly, and this dishonesty is killing me. I am so upset and disappointed and have banned video games for a week. My child is now super bored, and I am thinking that I overreacted. I think that maybe I was too harsh, but I am also still really upset and I feel like I must have messed up as a parent. I need your advice.

Sick and Tired of Being Lied To:

Dear Sick and Tired:

When children lie, it is both frustrating and confusing for many parents. But please stop beating yourself up! There are a number of reasons why children lie or tell only a part of the truth. James Lehman, MSW, says that kids lie for many reasons. He says that they lie to cover up their tracks, to avoid doing things that they don't want to, to fit in with their peers and also to protect other people. I would also like to add that over the many years as a school counsellor, I have experienced students telling lies to try to make themselves look better, especially if they are suffering from low self-esteem. I have also had many students lying to avoid getting into trouble.

So what do you do if your child does lie to you? As a parent and educator, I have always made it clear to my children and students that if they are honest, I will respect them more even though I may be upset about what happened. It takes a lot of courage to be honest, especially if children are owning up to something that was a poor choice. I also make it clear that the consequence for lying will be greater than it would if they are honest and made a poor choice. James Lehman, BSW, adds that it is important not to make a moral issue out of it. He says that if your child lies, turn it into a technical one and say "You broke the law. You broke the rules. These are your consequences". Make it clear and to the point that there is no point in arguing about what has happened or getting into a big discussion about it.

I also found a couple of great articles by Beth Arky titled Why kids lie and what parents can do about it: at <https://childmind.org/article/why-kis-lie/> and Ten Steps to stop a child from lying by Amy Morin <https://www.verywellfamily.com/steps-help-child-stop-lying-tell-the-truth-1094945>

The Counselling Corner is intended to offer some helpful ideas, encouragement and insight on a variety of topics to support your child's social and emotional learning. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns at hchang@sd43.bc.ca.

Harriette Chang
School Counsellor