

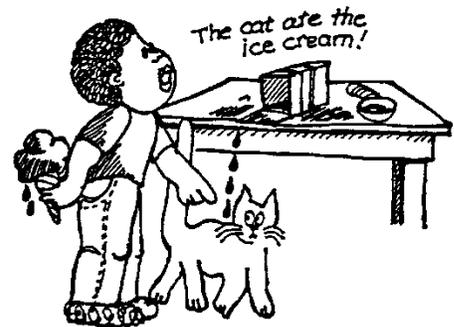
Over-reacting to Untruths – Cut It Out!

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When a child turns about four years old he often becomes an incredible story teller. When asked a question that could possibly get him in trouble he will also be clever enough to give you the answer that you might want to hear or that will keep his life peaceful. If you react to this “untruth” with a lecture, yelling or a consequence, you could be setting the stage for more “untruths” so *cut it out!* Don’t turn story telling or lying into some huge moral dilemma, a child’s perspective is egocentric: he can only see things from his own viewpoint, and from this viewpoint it just makes sense to lie, as he gets attention and stays out of trouble this way. The story of the “Boy Who Cried Wolf” teaches the child about the long-term consequences to him of telling untruths. Young children who lie are not “selfish or “bad”; they are just normal children who are not yet mature enough to recognize how others may feel.

Children over about seven are old enough to know what a lie is, and why it is wrong. If they lie it is usually for other reasons, such as to protect their privacy or to avoid punishment. This kind of lying needs to be handled differently, by removing the circumstances that make it necessary for the child to lie.

Sometimes children lie about a certain ability that they have in an attempt to raise their self-esteem. Ensuring that children get significant positive attention and sincere feedback for positive behaviours can make a difference.



- Don’t overreact – stay calm and know that this is normal.
- If you have a young child who gets lost in fantasy, gently ask if they are telling a story or say “Sounds like you are telling me a story, great!”
- Avoid labeling your child a *liar*.
- Praise your child for telling the truth, even if they did something wrong.
- Avoid using harsh punishment or stating disapproval of the child.
- Make it easy for your child to express his needs and be assertive.
- Let him know it is okay to make a mistake
- Set an example of honesty.