

**The Guiding Childhood Behavior Series  
has pamphlets on the following topics:**

- **biting**
- **crying**
- **discipline**
- **going to the store**
- **lying**
- **stealing**
- **teaching independence**
- **temper tantrums**
- **toilet training**

**Contact the Kent County Health Department  
if you would like to know more about these or  
other childhood behavior topics.**

**Kent County Health Department  
700 Fuller Avenue NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503  
(616)336-3040**

Copies of this brochure are available on the Kent County  
Health Department web site at  
[www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm](http://www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm)

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# **LYING**

## **Guiding Childhood Behavior Series**



**This pamphlet tells you:**

- **three reasons your child may lie.**
- **what to do if your child lies.**

## To Tell The Truth

Very young children do not know the difference between telling the truth and telling a lie. Being able to tell what is real and what is fantasy is a skill that takes years to develop. Therefore, your child is not trying to be bad and you should not punish him for making up stories or telling untruths. When you tell stories about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny you encourage a creative imagination in your child and that is good.

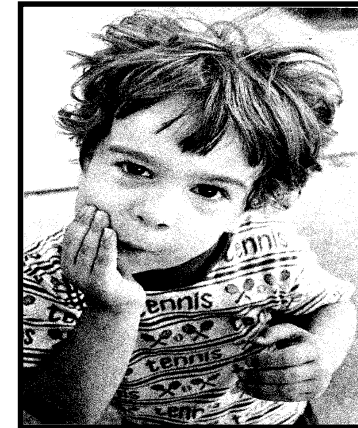
## Using Consequences

As your child gets older, he will learn the difference between the truth and a lie. However, your child may, at times, still tell a lie, especially if he is under emotional stress or if he is feeling insecure. You need to be a good role model for your child. Do not tell lies yourself. Even little "white lies" are noticed and can be copied by your child. If your child lies, the best way for you to handle it is to be calm and not judge him too harshly. You can also try setting up consequences when your child lies. For example:

- If your child tells a lie, tell him that you know he is lying.
- Together, set a consequence for the next time he lies.
- The next time your child lies, use the consequence.
- Stick to the consequence you both have set. One clear way you can "spoil" your child is to set a consequence and then not stick to it.



## Three Reasons Children Lie:



**To get your attention.** Sometimes when your child lies it may be a way of asking for more of your time and attention. Try to spend more time with your child. Set aside some quiet time each day when you can be alone with your child. Talk with your child and see if he is having a problem and needs your help.

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**To avoid being punished.** Does your child say he is not at fault even if you saw him do something wrong? Asking your child to admit his guilt will often set him up to lie to you. For example, saying, "Who broke the dish?" is setting your child up to say, "I don't know." But simply saying, "The dish is broken" will often get, "Yes, I am sorry."

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**Your child has a creative imagination.** If your child is creative and likes to tell tall tales, do not worry. Try listening to the story and then say, "That is some story! Now, tell me what really happened." This lets your child use his imagination, yet lets him know that you know he is not telling the truth.