

# What to do about children who lie, cheat & steal

Parents should be concerned if their child frequently lies, cheats in school or steals. To a small extent, these things are not unusual, but most children pass this phase before it becomes a problem. However, constant lying, cheating and stealing may be clues leading to a more serious problem.

## Why do children lie, cheat and steal:

- Hidden cry for help
- Peer pressure
- To get attention
- Learned from someone else
- Lack of discipline
- Alcohol and drug use
- To protect friends
- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- To get revenge
- To avoid obligation
- Lack of money
- Death in the family
- Divorce or separation

Lying, cheating and stealing often go together. They cause mistrust and suspicion among those affected by the child's actions. While damaged family relationships can be repaired, there can be permanent school and legal problems.

## What can parents do?

- Set a good example. Moral training begins at home.
- Be consistent with discipline.
- Teach respect for others, their property and rights.
- Encourage a healthy, stable family atmosphere.
- Maintain open communication.
- Give your child the opportunity to express feelings.
- Make sure your child is well supervised.
- Be alert and aware of what your child is doing and with whom.
- Be involved in your child's studies.
- Express love and affection.
- Reward good behavior.
- Praise your child's honesty.
- Spend as much time with your child as you can.
- Discuss the consequences of having a police record.
- If needed, seek professional help.
- Teach your children to make amends and apologize for their behaviors.

## Who to call for help

- School counselors, psychologists or the principal
- Social service organizations such as your local children's services or health department
- Counselors, psychiatrists, therapists, or other mental health professionals



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**Parenting Questions? Call the Parent Helpline at 1-800-332-6378**

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