

Can the little lies of parents affect the emotional well-being of children?



▲ The study found that adults whose parents seemed to lie to them frequently were more likely to engage in intrusive or even manipulative behavior. [+ LightFieldStudios / IStock.com / LightFieldStudios / IStock.com](#)

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A study conducted by the University of Singapore suggests that parents' lies can affect the minds of their children, including in adulthood.

Parents necessarily lie a little to their children. By spite, by omission or sometimes for the "good" of their offspring. But be careful to limit your lies and try as much as possible to provide an honest argument to your heads when you refuse to access any of their requests, warn researchers at the National University of Singapore.

The latter led in collaboration with the universities of Toronto (Canada), San Diego (USA) and Zhejiang (China) - a study published in [The Journal of Experimental Child Psychology](#). For this research, 379 young adults (average age 21) were asked to complete 4 questionnaires.

The first was to indicate the frequency with which they felt that their parents were lying to them as children. For example: "If you do not come with me now, I'll leave you here alone". Or again: "I did not take my wallet on me, we will come back another day".

The second questionnaire was devoted to the participants' own lies, this time formulated at the address of their parents. Finally, the last two dealt with the prosocial behavior of volunteers and their tendency to behave selfishly and impulsively.

Distinguish lies without consequence of potentially harmful ones

In reviewing the responses, the study found that adults whose parents seemed to lie to them frequently were more likely to engage in intrusive or even manipulative behavior.

"Asserting authority over children is a form of psychological intrusion that can undermine children's sense of autonomy and rejection, which ultimately undermines their emotional well-being." Parents should be aware of these potential implications and consider alternatives to lying, "suggests Peipei Setoh, assistant professor at the School of Social Science at the National University of Singapore (NTU) and lead author of the study.

While this theory is interesting, it has limitations, starting with the fact that the answers were obtained from participants' self-assessments and, in addition, based on memories from their childhood.

The authors of the study also said that it would be wise to involve parents in future research on the subject, in order to distinguish "harmless" lies from those that could harm the psychological well-being of their children.