



LIFE

## Study shows, parents who lie to their kids, raise children who are more likely to fib

Looks like honesty really IS the best policy

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By [Clara Kelly](#)

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"If you don't behave, the man will come get you" and other classic Irish mammy lies, may actually be more harmful than we think, according to a new study.

Parents' lies elicit compliance in the short term, but a new psychology study led by Nanyang Technological [University](#), Singapore (NTU Singapore) suggests that they are associated with detrimental effects when the child becomes an adult.

The research team asked 379 young adults through four surveys whether their parents lied to them when they were children, how much they lie to their parents now.

Adults who reported being lied to more as children, were more likely to report lying to their parents in their adulthood.

They also said they faced greater difficulty in meeting psychological and social challenges.

Adjustment difficulties include disruptiveness, conduct problems, experience of guilt and shame, as well as selfish and manipulative character.

The research, done in collaboration with Canada's University of Toronto, the United States' University of California, San Diego, and China's Zhejiang Normal University, was published in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* in September.

[Sciendaily](#) reported, Lead author Assistant Professor Setoh Peipei from NTU Singapore's School of Social Sciences said, "Parenting by lying can seem to save time especially when the real reasons behind why parents want children to do something is complicated to explain.

When parents tell children that 'honesty is the best policy', but display dishonesty by lying, such behaviour can send conflicting messages to their children.

**Parents** ' dishonesty may eventually erode trust and promote dishonesty in children."

The first questionnaire asked participants to recall if their parents told them lies that related to eating; leaving and/or staying; children's misbehaviour; and spending money.

The second questionnaire asked participants to indicate how frequently as adults they lied to their parents.

Lastly, participants filled in two questionnaires that measured their self-reported psychosocial maladjustment and tendency to behave selfishly and impulsively.

"Authority assertion over **children** is a form of psychological intrusiveness, which may undermine children's sense of autonomy and convey rejection, ultimately undermining children's emotional well-being.

Future research should examine the nature of the lies and goals of the parents so that researchers can suggest what kind of lies to avoid, and what kind of truth-telling parents should engage in."

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