



You enter the kitchen. Your child looks at you like she's hiding something. You see cake crumbs on the bench and the tips of her fingers. 'Did you eat the chocolate cake?' Your child smiles at you, with chocolate stuck in her teeth, and innocently replies, 'No.'

You know your child is not telling the truth. The evidence is everywhere! So, what do you do?

Honesty is an essential value for children and young people to develop as it's central to building trust and community cohesion. Here are some simple, effective ways to encourage your child to be honest.

Remember, telling fibs is normal

Catching your child in a lie can be frustrating but remembering that it's a normal part of growing up can help you keep calm. While there is a moral aspect to honesty, children in the early years of primary school tend to be very concrete thinkers, responding better to your immediate concerns such as 'I need to know you are telling the truth' Instead of the moral aspects of right and wrong. For older primary aged children and teenagers, the broader issues of trust and morality are parts of the conversations you should have.

Don't ask questions if you know the answer

If your son is smeared in chocolate cake, don't say, 'Did you eat the chocolate cake?' Instead try, 'I can see you ate some chocolate cake. You must have been hungry huh?' Then pause and ask, 'Do you think I'm pleased or upset? Why? What should we do next time?' Use the awkward situation as an opportunity to find out more about what your child may need.

Show the truth

If you are a parent of a teenager, you know how easily parent-teen relationships can be harmed by accusations and criticism. If you think that a teenager may have misled you about an area of concern such as not being where they said they were, then it's probably wisest to bring your young person's attention to evidence of the truth rather than back them into a corner with an accusation. "You said you were at Jana's, but her mum said that Jana didn't have any visitors yesterday" is a statement of truth from your perspective that invites a response from a young person.

Honesty takes time and maturity to learn, especially in the face of the clearly tactical advantages of bending the truth. As parents, nurture honesty in kids by modelling, discussi