

Why do they LIE?

I know you know this look. And if you have a teenager with ADHD who is often caught in a lie, it makes you wonder if they are EVER honest with you. Which makes you think back over all the stories they've told you. And you wonder. Then you question. And you lie in bed at night and decide you're going to hug them every time they come home from being out with friends to "let them know how much you love them", when you're really just sniffing them to see what they've been up to tonight. Then you feel guilty. How could I NOT trust my kid? Wait, this is not MY fault! HE did this to himself!

Yeah. You're not alone. I'm a therapist and this still happens to me. So you are probably wondering why your little darling would ever lie to begin with, even over little or inconsequential things like, "Did you take the trash out?"--- to which he says "Yes, mom!" and as you see the garbage truck drive by your house, you look down and the kitchen trash bag is still overflowing with last night's leftovers. SERIOUSLY?? Here are some EXPLANATIONS, NOT EXCUSES as to why this may be happening.

BLAME IT ON POOR EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING.

1. **POOR IMPULSE CONTROL** Little Lucy might be having a hard time saying no at parties these days, mom. The school and the parties are inundated with vapes, dab pens, blunts, gummies, edibles, and alcohol. Our kids can get it freely and get it on the cheap, and it is powerfully addicting. Add a little RISKY BEHAVIOR predisposal because kids with ADHD don't have enough properly functioning dopamine receptors in their brains. To combat this, they subconsciously seek stimulation for that prefrontal cortex that is ooohhhh sooooo dark and empty. This stimulation may come in the form of non-goal- oriented movement, too much talking, irritating others, and yes, trying drugs and alcohol. I will also tell you that where I live, teens think it's the norm to do one if not more of these things. They have normalized it to the point that they're not afraid to talk about it or text about "hitting each other's vape", or putting their skills on SnapChat to show friends how talented they are with the things they can make the smoke do, coming out of their mouths. (It's the weirdest thing)

2. **INCREASED ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION** Everything above can also be related to their moods which are often dysregulated. This stuff makes you feel better. For a little while. Until you don't, so then you have to get more.

Bottom line is, they may be doing things they're not supposed to do, so they are lying to cover it up. More lies become harder to remember, so things become sketchy. Not saying your little darling is doing ANY of this, I'm just saying it could be a reason they are lying.

3. **POOR WORKING MEMORY** Little Leroy had a math test last week. Hearing nothing about it, you inquire as to its results. "Fine", he says. "Fine?" you ask. "What did you get?" He replies, "A B, mom...it's fine." and he blows out the door with a snack or two or three in his hand as he taps away on his phone to find a friend. Or win a game. Or look at memes. Or whatever it is they do. So you check online because it feels "off", and sure enough, he got a D. Why would he lie to you? You're not that mom that yells about grades!? Well, tbh, he probably completely forgot. Like for real. Never crossed

his mind to even find out what he got on the math test. At this point, he probably doesn't even remember having taken it.

4. **POOR COPING SKILLS** Teens with ADHD often avoid the truth because, in the moment, it helps put off the shame or self-frustration they would feel if they actually owned up to the truth. They don't like the fact that they are using substances or failing a class or forgetting assignments, so they just lie to get out of it and make the discomfort disappear for the moment. They can't see past the nose on their precious faces, so it's all about NOW. What do I have to do or say to feel good NOW? (enter procrastination problems with anything they don't want to do...see the correlation here?)

Unfortunately, they are really good at digging themselves into holes
and then not being able to get themselves OUT. It becomes a way of life and of coping.

So, when they lie, here are some things you can try:

(credit: understood.org)

1. **Don't count it as betrayal.** Focus more on what the lie was about and less on the lie itself.
2. **Anticipate what she might lie about.** Keep dialogue open
3. **Never ask them if they did something that you KNOW they did and expect them to come clean.** In other words, don't put them in the position to have to lie. If they did something you know about, calmly confront them and deal with it. Don't set them up for failure and trouble. Confront them with evidence and get their input on how to fix it.
4. **Remove the shame of lying.** Don't excuse it but let her know you understand the thinking that went into her decision to lie. Say, "let's figure out what got you here and how to get you back on track."
5. **Don't dismiss drug or alcohol use as "normal" teen behavior.** THEY think it's normal but find out why they're using. If it's to mask feeling a certain way, figure it out and help them before it gets out of control.

Thanks for reading. Forward to a friend if you think it might help.

Peace