

GET RESULTS WITH BETTER CONVERSATIONS

What do you do about lying or stealing?

First, don't be shocked. Despite doing all you can to make clear your expectations about the guidelines for acceptable behavior in your home, the young people who have been entrusted to your care may have come from environments in which it was totally normal to steal to get their needs met. They may have been raised watching parents lie and steal, so the concept of ethical and moral behavior may be new to them. Of course that doesn't mean that you should allow them to do wrong, but it is important that you not only tell, but show, them the right way to live. For example, when the phone rings, don't say things like, "tell her I'm not home."

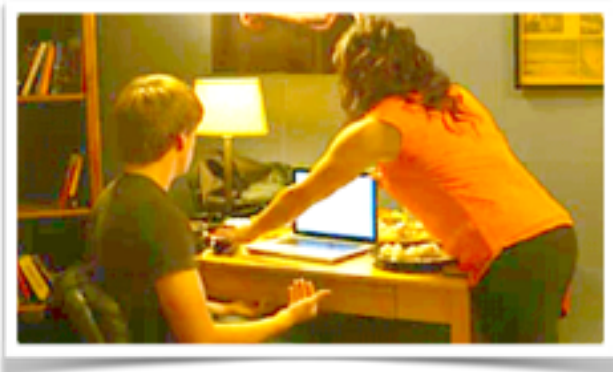


Here are some suggestions for healthy responses for dealing with lying or stealing:

- ☑ **Calm down.** Pause and take a deep breath before you do or say anything.
- ☑ **Always respond in terms of safety** of the young person. Explain how the behavior can lead to bad results, saying something like, "*Lying or stealing can land you in jail. I care about you and want to help you stay safe and have a good life.*"

Give the young people within your influence examples of hypothetical times you could lie to them or take something from them. Ask them to pause and consider how that would make them feel.

- ☑ **Put some time between the event and the correction.** It's ok to say, *"We will talk about this later. Let's both take some time to think about what we need to do about this."* Then when you do talk about it, ask the young person what consequences he or she thinks should be imposed. Ask what he or she can do to earn your trust back.



- ☑ **When everyone is calmed down, ask what the young person is trying to achieve** from lying or stealing.
- ☑ **Ask the young person for ideas** on what he or she could do differently to feel better, fit in, or whatever other result he or she hopes to achieve.
- ☑ **If you issue consequences, make sure they are directly related to the offense.** For example, have the young person return or replace the stolen item. If the offense is a lie, ask the young person to apologize and promise to be honest in the future.

Before you can instill good character traits in the young people within your influence, you must first explain what good character is.

Compliment good character traits of courage, tenacity, resourcefulness, determination, adaptability, and others so that kids have an idea of the good that is expected of them rather than just the bad behavior that is to be avoided.

It will take time, patience, and a commitment to love and listening to heal the youth in your care. **They are worth it.**

“For many foster kids lying and stealing are normal. Life with you is teaching them a new normal.”
—Rhonda Sciortino

Thank you for helping to create successful survivors!

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