

## **Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective**

### **Episode #154: Why Kids with ADHD Lie and What to Do About It**

Lori: It feels very emotional as a parent, when our kids lie. It feels like a breaking of trust.

Katie Hi there. We are The Childhood Collective, and we have helped thousands of overwhelmed parents find joy and confidence in raising their child with ADHD. I'm Katie, a speech language pathologist.

Lori: And I'm Lori.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory. And we're both child psychologists.

Lori: As busy mamas ourselves, we are on a mission to support ADHD parents on this beautiful and chaotic parenting journey.

Mallory: If you are looking for honest ADHD parenting stories, a dose of empathy with a side of humor and practical tools, you are in the right place.

Katie: Let's help your family shine with ADHD.

Mallory: I once worked with a family who was frustrated over their ADHD child's Jekyll and Hyde personality. Most of the time, their child was a sweet, happy kid, but at the smallest request, he could flip to an hour-long meltdown. After walking on eggshells for years, the whole family was super stressed, and his parents found themselves arguing constantly about how to best discipline him.

Katie: If you can relate to this family's situation, you are not alone.

Lori: That's why we created our online course, Creating Calm, to give you practical strategies to address challenging behaviors that are incredibly common in ADHD.

Mallory: And as a bonus, these tools will help the whole family get on the same page so there's less arguing in your home.

Katie: Here's what Kate had to say after taking the course: "Creating calm has helped me really understand ADHD and given me so many practical tools to support my son and make

our days not such a battle. I've read so many books, but they just didn't give real life examples and tools. This course has been so worth the investment and something I'll keep coming back to revisit.”

Lori: A year from now, you're going to wish you had started today. Head to [thechildhoodcollective.com/yes](https://thechildhoodcollective.com/yes) and enter the exclusive code PODCAST to get 10% off our course when you enroll today. You can also grab the link and code in the show notes.

Today I'm here with Katie and we are tackling a challenging behavior for many kids with ADHD; Lying.

Katie: Yes, lying is such a tricky behavior. When kids lie, we as parents can really overreact and we start to feel like our kids can never be trusted.

Lori: And the truth is that lying is really a normal part of brain development. So around four to six years of age, kids will learn that other people can't read their mind, and their thoughts are private. So it's actually a really exciting development for a lot of kids.

Katie: I love that reframe. I was very excited for the walking and talking stages of development with my kids, but not nearly as excited when they figured out that they could lie to me.

Lori: I know. And lying is a bit more complicated and common in kids with ADHD. So this is not because our kids are naughty. Again, we say these things all the time, it's not because the kids are naughty, they're bad. It really is just a product of how their brain is developing.

Katie: It's true. So because differences in executive functioning, our kids with ADHD really tend to live in the moment. So Doctor Russell Barkley, who's one of our favorites, he'll call it inattention to the future. So they're really living in the moment. And when you're living in the moment, a lie can seem like a great solution because basically it allows you to get out of something that you wanted to avoid. You might think that you're going to avoid having consequences. If you kind of did something impulsively and didn't think it through, now I can just lie and cover up my tracks because it's really hard for our kids to think about how is this going to affect them in the future. And the bummer about this is that it actually can lead to more lies as they try to cover their tracks. And I know for myself, I even say I'm a really bad

liar because I don't have enough of a memory to remember what I said before. So this is really tricky because when you once you start lying, you almost get stuck in a lie and then you have to keep going. And for someone with working memory problems, this is really challenging.

Lori: Yes, absolutely. And lying can also happen if kids are struggling to meet our expectations. So they might try to get out of tasks that are really hard for them or tasks that are not preferred. So if you're asking them to clean their room or take a shower or things like that, they might lie to get out of those things. They might also lie to get approval from teachers or parents or their friends.

Katie: Absolutely. So we obviously, as parents, all know that our kids with ADHD can really struggle with lying. And today we want to focus attention on what can we do about this. All right, so we're going to be sharing four strategies that you can start using when your child lies to you. And part of this is to really encourage and develop their honesty, which is a skill to be honest.

Lori: It is. And the first tip that we have for you is to really start to get curious about why that behavior is happening. So I'm going to give you a tangible example of this. So I had a friend and she had sort of come to me and was talking about how her daughter with ADHD was lying a lot and she was really concerned about it. And so we started talking and it was all happening at school a lot. And we kind of, you know, I said, well, let me kind of talk to her teacher and maybe you can talk to her teacher. And so we found out that it was often happening, or most of it was happening when it came to earning points or losing points, I should say, in the classroom. So I don't know if any of you guys remember this is like a really old classroom system, but it was called make your day. Do you remember that?

Katie: I do not. But you were telling me about it and I'm like appalled.

Lori: So I've been, like, around for a long time in the school systems, and the school systems like change their kind of classroom management strategies. A lot of them are very shame based and this was one of them. I hated make your day. It was really popular 15 years ago. I actually worked at a school for kids with severe emotional and behavioral challenges that did make your day, and it was such a nightmare. We actually advocated to change the whole system that was more positive. But I'll kind of explain. You start with a certain amount of

points at the beginning of each day, and anytime you have a challenging behavior, you then lose points for certain things. And if you don't lose a certain amount of points, you can make your day. Again, it was so long ago, I don't remember the whole system, but it also was you had to state if you had earned your points throughout the day for certain periods. And this particular girl had ADHD and so she a lot of times wasn't earning the amount of points as her peers. So she would like lie about them or say she had earned more and so her teacher would have a conversation with her. So she was in this situation really avoiding like the shame that came with talking about, like, the fact that she wasn't doing as well as other kids as far as staying on task or raising her hand or things like that and avoiding the consequences.

Katie: It's so hard to hear about, honestly.

Lori: I know. And at the end of the school week, you could, if you made day a certain amount of days, she could earn a prize box. And she was super motivated for that, so she didn't want to lose out on that, right. So her, you know, she was acting like she was doing better than she was. So we had kind of a conversation with the teacher and because she had ADHD, and this is why this is why we talk about the need for 504 plans and accommodations at school just to kind of reemphasize this, is that if there are really crappy systems, classroom systems like this that are really shame or punitively based, we can adapt that and change that for our kids with ADHD. So many of you have like, red, yellow, green systems where if you're disobeying your kids, go on yellow or go on red, and everyone in the classroom sees that. And we've talked about that. That is so, like, triggering and a lot of kids with ADHD that I've worked with will become super emotional and upset when their card is changed or whatever, because it's, they're really, you know, it's really upsetting to them. So we can change those systems a lot of times when we have specific accommodation plans for kids with ADHD. So that's what we did. Her mom talked with the teacher about adapting the system for her. She didn't lose points, we actually shifted it and worked on earning points. So, again, get at the real issue. So start to really get curious about why this is happening or if there's a pattern to it. If you're seeing it happen all the time over showers or homework or certain situations at school, that's going to really help you pinpoint how to work with your child on developing that skill.

Katie: I love that. And I think one of the things that I am working on with myself, too, is being, coming at things from a curious place. And so I personally will say all the time, I'm so

anxious about this. And I replace anxious with curious. And it's actually amazing because I'll say, instead of saying, I'm so anxious about, you know, the party this weekend or what's going on with my kids, it's like, no, let's get curious. And just by replacing that word, I'm really curious to see how this goes. It really changes the perspective. And so when we become curious, we're much more open minded and it takes us out of our emotional brain of being scared or stressed or thinking, oh, my gosh, my child is going to lie to me for the rest of their life. You know, they're not going to be able to hold down a job. This can be really, we can sensationalize it, but when we're curious what's going on, it really takes us out of that mind and puts us into, okay, what's going on? And how can I problem solve? And so I love this.

Lori: Yeah, it's a problem if you're approaching it as opposed to, like, very personal reaction of they're doing this because of our relationship or whatever, and saying, no, this is a function of their brain development, and there's an issue here we can solve. And then we become less emotional about it.

Katie: Absolutely. So our second tip ties perfectly with this, and that is to bring your child along as you figure this out, okay. So we all, as parents, I think, have a tendency to know a lot and think, okay, I know what to do, or I think I have a theory, and that's great. And another thing that you can do is to bring your child along with you. And so as you're talking about the issues or coming to them and saying, okay, I've noticed this, or your teacher let me know. I want to let you know you're not in trouble. I'm on your team, and we need to figure this out. And so basically what you're doing there is you're opening up the dialogue. And a lot of times when we lie, we feel very alone because we're the only one that knows the truth. And so what you're doing is you're coming alongside your child and you're letting them know you're not alone, and we can figure this out together. And again, it becomes more collaborative and more problem solving. And I love the example that you gave Lori of once you were able to talk with the teacher and the mom was able to help this child advocate, they could actually shift the system. But a lot of times, kids don't have that view. They don't know that there's other ways to change it. And so by giving them a voice and saying, what do you think? And I will say, you know, my kids are seven and just a newly minted ten-year-old, and you know, I think I sometimes underestimate their ability to problem solve. You know, especially my seven-year-old, he will come up with amazing solutions when I ask him, what do you think, bud? What's going on for you? And if they can't, then you're there to provide

some ideas and to discuss it. But again, we want to really get at what is the core of this. Why is this hard?

Lori: Yeah. And I think that's a great point, because even in this situation, when we sat down with this little girl and we're talking with her, she was very much able to say, I feel really embarrassed that all the other kids are doing better than I am, basically. And I really, really want to earn that prize box, and I didn't earn it for two weeks, so I'm going to do whatever I can to earn that prize box, right. So she was really able to articulate those things, even at the young age of seven, and talk about some of those things that were bothering her. You know, again, I said we were able to shift her system, and we talk about this all the time in our online course, *Creating Calm*, that our focus whenever we see a challenging behavior is to get away from punishment. We just know that those punishments don't teach our kids new skills. They don't teach our kids what they want. They result in shame and a lot of times, more challenging behaviors. and we really want to focus on teaching and reinforcing those skills that we want. But in this particular situation, we created, like, a little, she loved balloons, and she could color in balloons when she was honest during the day. And we again, got to the root of the issue where the shame, about talking about those points in front of other kids. So her system changed where she could earn points for honesty, she could earn points for raising her hand, which was a lot of times why she was getting in trouble at school because she was blurting out or interrupting and things like that. So, again, it was more of a positively focused system on how do we be honest? How do we teach honesty? As opposed to punishment, which when we focus on the punishments, a lot of times our kids lie even more to avoid them.

Katie: Absolutely. I think that's something that we've all experienced.

Lori: For my kids, the last thing they want to do when they get home from school is homework.

Katie: Totally and the last thing I want to do after a long day of work is deal with the stress of meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning up the kitchen.

Lori: Same here. We tried Hungryroot grocery service to help us eat balanced meals while saving time and money every week. It's been a game changer for our weekly meals and

snacks, and I love that you can customize groceries based on your kids or your family's dietary restrictions.

Katie: Yes! My husband eats gluten free and I love that I can customize groceries based on our family's needs. And not only can I get complete meals delivered, but I can also order my weekly groceries through them. And I'm always amazed at how my kids will try new things just because they came out of our Hungryroot box.

Lori: Yes! It's easy to customize your box each week and you can skip weeks whenever you want. For a limited time, Hungryroot is offering our listeners 40% off your first box, which is amazing. Just be sure to use the code: CHILDHOODCOLLECTIVE40 so you can get the discount.

Katie: We also have the link and the code in the show notes, so you can try Hungryroot today.

Lori: Over the past year, my oldest has really struggled with anxiety, especially at night. As soon as it was time for sleep, she'd be crying for me to stay and worrying about all the things. I was talking to another therapist about our bedtime battles and she said the Zenimal, a screen free meditation device, had been a game changer for her daughter with ADHD and anxiety. I immediately purchased the Zenimal and can confidently say it was the best tool to help my daughter get better sleep. She was able to fall asleep an hour earlier using it.

Katie: Yes, it's actually really helped my kids to be able to calm their busy bodies at night.

Mallory: What we love about the Zenimal is that it combines two of our favorite bedtime recommendations, using a relaxation strategy and removing screens from the bedroom.

Katie: The Zenimal is an adorable screen free turtle with nine guided meditations your kids can choose from. And our absolute favorite part of the Zenimal is that every meditation ends with the most important message, 'you're a good kid.'

Lori: To grab your own Zenimal and get your child and yourself some better sleep, head to [Zenimals.com](https://zenimals.com) and use our code: TCC for a discount. You can also find the link in the show notes.

Katie: Our third tip is, don't invite the lie. And, what I mean by that is a lot of times we might try to test our kids or see if they're going to tell the truth. And honestly, sometimes it's not even conscious, like, I'm going to test you. But we might ask a question that we already know the answer to. So, as an example, if you see that, you know, there's some frosting missing from the brownies, and you can see your kids little, you know, little finger marks in there, and maybe they even have some chocolate on their face, right. Instead of saying, oh, did you eat these brownies? To see what your child will say, you can just state what you see. Oh, I see you got into the brownies. You don't need to test your kids. And this is something that comes up a lot, because again, we want our kids to be able to think through what they should say or do in that moment. And when we put them on the spot like that, that can be an immediate trigger for them to be like, no, I didn't. It wasn't me. And now we're stuck in a situation with a lie. So instead, you can just say, I see that you ate the brownies. And then you can figure out, okay, depending on the situation, what you want to do from there. But not having our kids answer questions that we already know the answer to, because that can be kind of like entrapment.

Lori: Absolutely. And the fourth tip that we have is try as much as you can to stay calm when your child is lying and offer what we would call a redo when it's appropriate. So, again, I want to emphasize the fact that it feels very emotional as a parent when our kids lie. It feels like a breaking of trust in our relationship.

Katie: Even if you grew up in a house where there was a lot of lying, when you have this sense of, oh, my gosh, I grew up with this, and it can be very triggering. So we just want to normalize that for parents. Of course, this is going to be really hard when your child lies to you, but the best thing that you can do is to try to keep your cool rather than kind of having a really big reaction. Because the bigger your reaction, interestingly enough, it might actually make your child lie more. Because, again, they're trying to avoid that reaction. And so when you stay calm and cool, then it can really help to not make them fearful and then in that case, they're going to try to avoid again.

Lori: Yep. So a great example of this might be, let's say you talk to your child and you ask them, hey, did you get your homework done? And they're like, yep, I did. Next thing you do is you look inside their backpack and there's homework in there that is definitely not completed. So you might say, you said you did get your homework done. I just found your



unfinished math homework in here. Let's try this again. Okay, so did you get your math homework done? And give your child another chance to give an honest response. Again, I think many kids with ADHD, we think they're lying. And sometimes they actually didn't even remember, right. Like, they didn't remember on the first. So I think sometimes when I'm talking with parents, it can be that they think they did certain things and you're seeing it as a lie. Sometimes they just didn't even recognize that they had the homework or whatever. Or they got their ELA homework done and they didn't get their math done because they forgot that they had it. So just offering another chance. Oh, I see your math homework isn't done. Let's try this again. Did you get your math homework done? And give them another chance to do that. Again, it's just another way to give your child that opportunity to do the right thing and give you the right response.

Katie: I love that example too, because taking it a step further, when we think about a lot of times kids tell a lie, we want to give them a punishment. And as you were talking about not giving an overly punitive or overly aggressive punishment, in that case, a consequence might just be, oh, you said we did our math homework. I see it's not finished. Let's finish it up before we can go to the next activity. And essentially, what you're doing there is you're not giving your child a punishment, but the logical and natural consequence of not finishing the math homework is that we have to sit down and do it. And we have to do it before we can play outside, before we can have video games, before we can go see our friends. So you're really just guiding your child through that and saying, okay, I understand we're not going to focus on that piece, but here's what we're going to do. And you're setting up a boundary. And I think this is really difficult for parents sometimes. I know it's hard for me, too, because there's times when I know if I set this boundary and I say, we have to do this math homework, my child might be frustrated and they might protest or argue, and it might turn into something bigger. And sometimes it's almost like I avoid and I'm like, I don't want to fight with you. But when we set that boundary and we say, no, we have to finish this math homework before we can do the next thing, and it's up to you, because it can take five minutes or it can take a really, really long time. And again, this is really challenging, but over time, we are teaching our kids and flexing that muscle and building that muscle of, I can just get this done. And so again, you're sort of counteracting the temptation to lie and be like, yeah, yeah, it's done. Because, hey, actually, it wasn't that hard in the first place, and we got it finished. So I think that's the biggest takeaway here. When it comes to giving the redo, don't give a big, huge consequence. Keep in mind that that can really promote more lying, which is

obviously the opposite of what we're trying to do. And so we want to help our kids to be seen and also to have the skills to tell the truth. And on that same note, when your child tells the truth, make it a celebration and really call that out. You know, hey, I know that was hard for you. I specifically walked into my daughter's class a few days ago, and the teacher, they do poetry recitation, and so each child gets up and says a poem. And my daughter was not doing her poem, but she was reading a book while another kid was doing her poem. And I'm looking around because I was coming to volunteer at lunch, and so I was a few minutes early, and I'm seeing that no other kids have a book in front of them. They're all listening to the person that's giving saying their poem. And so later on, I asked her, I said, hey, you know, were you supposed to be reading a book? And she's like, immediately, she's like, no. And I was like, okay, hey, like, I get that, but how do you think that feels to that kid when they're up there? And we had this whole conversation. Well, then the next day, she came home and I was like, did you read your book while you were doing class? Right? Because I'm kind of just curious. I wasn't trying to catch her in a lie. I was genuinely curious. Like, did we, have we learned anything from this, or are we starting over? And she was honest about it, but what she had to say was, yeah, I read my book during math. And so here's my dichotomy, right? Because I could come down on her and be like, well, we talked about this, and you're not supposed to read your book, and I'm going to email your teacher. But what I did instead is I started with, I am so proud of you for telling me the truth. And I could just kind of see her, like, relax and be like, whew, okay, like, that's good news. And then I was able to follow it up with, but how are you going to do your math homework if you have no idea what an acute angle is because you just totally missed the lecture. And so then we got into a whole conversation. If she's not listening, she really can't understand. And so today, I sent her off to school, and we talked about it again. What are we going to do during math? We're not going to read our book, and we'll see where we go from here. I don't know exactly what the outcome is, but I think the most important key takeaway here is that we want to make sure that we come from a place of understanding and curiosity and by opening the door and saying, hey, I'm so proud of you that you told the truth, even though that was hard. You're again growing that skill of being honest and seeing the outcome of that is actually a really great relationship with my parent.

Lori: Yeah, and when we're focusing our attention on teaching honesty, you're so right that again, even when you offer a redo or any of those things, you're bringing it back to giving specific, positive feedback on I love how you were honest with me in this situation and

building up that skill and even talking about it throughout the day when you have a choice of lying or being honest. Oh, I know I really wanted to not do this because I was really uncomfortable in this situation, but instead I told the truth. And think about again, are you modeling honesty? And if you are like talking to your kids about that so they can see that as well.

Katie: So our key takeaway today is that kids with ADHD can struggle with lying and this is not something that you're doing wrong. This is due to challenges and differences in their executive functioning. So when your child is lying, we really want to get curious about what's going on and work with them to develop a positive plan to teach honesty and give those do overs as needed. And as always, we are here to support you.

Thanks for listening to *Shining with ADHD* by your hosts, Lori, Katie, and Mallory of The Childhood Collective.

Mallory: If you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a review and hit subscribe so you can be the first to know when a new episode airs.

Lori: If you are looking for links and resources mentioned in this episode, you can always find those in the show notes. See you next time!