

THE NIGERIAN PARENT'S STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

THE TRUTH- SAFETY LOOP™

How to Help Your Child Tell the Truth
Without Shouting or Endless Punishment in 7 Days

RAISE A CHILD
WHO CHOOSES
THE TRUTH.
BUILD TRUST.
CREATE A HOME
OF HONESTY.

Break the
Cycle of Lying
for Good

Practical Scripts
for Everyday
Situations

Build Trust
That Lasts

Consequences
Without
Damage

The 7-Day
Truth Reset™
Plan

PRACTICAL TOOLS. SIMPLE STEPS. REAL RESULTS.

A BETTER WAY TO RAISE HONEST, RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN.

G B E M I

NIGERIAN PARENT. REAL LIFE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

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Chapter 1

When “I Didn’t Do It” Becomes the Answer to Everything

There is a point when your child's lying stops feeling like a small parenting problem.

It may start with something silly.

“Did you eat the biscuits?”

“No.”

You look at the empty wrapper on the table.

“Did you finish your homework?”

“Yes.”

You check the book.

Nothing.

“Who broke this?”

“I don’t know.”

And somehow, every answer starts sounding the same.

“I didn’t do it.”

At first, you may laugh.

Then you get annoyed.

Then you start checking everything.

And after a while, something changes inside you.

You stop asking because you want information.

You start asking because you want to **catch the lie**.

That is when things can get exhausting.

The Lie Is Usually Not the Part That Hurts Most

Let me put it this way.

If my child makes a mistake, I can deal with the mistake.

A broken cup can be replaced.

Homework can be done.

A spilled drink can be cleaned.

A forgotten chore can be finished.

But when my child looks at me and says something I believe is not true, I may start thinking about something much bigger.

“Can I trust my child?”

That question hits differently.

Because as a parent, trust matters.

You want to believe that when your child tells you what happened at school, that is what happened.

You want to believe that when they say they did their homework, they did it.

You want to believe that if something serious happens, they will come to you.

So when the little lies keep coming, your mind can run ahead.

You start thinking:

What if this gets worse?

What if my child becomes dishonest?

What if I am raising someone who cannot be trusted?

Take a breath.

We're going to slow this down.

Because one of the biggest mistakes I see parents make is turning **a child's lying behaviour into a label about the child's whole character.**

There is a big difference between:

“My child lied.”

and

“My child is a liar.”

The first describes something that happened.

The second can become a story the child starts believing about themselves.

And once that happens, changing the behaviour can become much harder.

“But I Have Told This Child a Thousand Times!”

I know.

You have probably already had the talk.

Maybe more than once.

You have said:

“Always tell the truth.”

“Don't lie to me.”

“Tell me what really happened.”

“Do you know what happens to people who lie?”

You may have even brought out the big speech.

You know the one.

The speech about honesty.

The speech about good character.

The speech about how parents sacrifice everything for their children.

The speech about how you carried them for nine months.

And somehow, five minutes later, the child is still saying:

“But I didn't do it.”

At that point, it is very easy to think:

This child does not fear me.

Or:

This child does not respect me.

Or even:

Maybe I have been too soft.

So you become stricter.

More questions.

More punishment.

More warnings.

More checking.

And sometimes, the child lies again.

Now you are angry.

They are scared.

Nobody is listening.

Everybody is defending themselves.

It can feel like a family meeting has turned into a courtroom.

And all this over a missing piece of chicken.

You have been there, right?

The Things We Usually Try First

When parents see repeated lying, most of us reach for the tools we already know.

There is nothing strange about that.

If something is not working, we often think we simply need **more of the same thing**.

We shout.

“Why are you lying?”

“Look at me when I'm talking to you!”

“Tell me the truth!”

The problem is that shouting may get a child to stop talking.

It does not always help them become more honest.

We punish.

No phone.

No television.

No playing outside.

No treats.

Or we resort to the cane

Sometimes the punishment is needed because something wrong happened.

But there is an important question:

Are we giving a consequence for the behaviour, or are we using punishment to force a confession?

Those are not the same thing.

We ask the same question again and again.

“Did you do it?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Don't lie.”

"I'm not lying."

"I know you're lying."

"No, I'm not."

Now you are both stuck.

The child is trying to defend the story.

You are trying to break the story.

And the conversation keeps getting hotter.

We lecture.

This one is very common.

We explain honesty.

Then respect.

Then responsibility.

Then the future.

Then what happened to someone's cousin's friend's child who lied and became a terrible person.

By the end, the child has nodded about twenty times.

But nodding is not the same as learning.

And this is where I want you to notice something.

You can be completely right about honesty and still use a response that does not help your child become more honest.

That does not make you a bad parent.

It means there may be another piece to the puzzle.

What If the Problem Is Bigger Than the Lie?

Imagine this.

Your child breaks a cup.

They know they broke it.

They also know that if they tell you, you may become very angry.

So their brain has a choice.

Tell the truth and face the reaction now.

Or deny it and hope the problem goes away.

I'm not saying every lie happens because a child is afraid of punishment.

That's not true.

Children can lie for many reasons.

They may want to avoid embarrassment.

They may want something.

They may be testing limits.

They may be protecting another child.

They may be trying to get attention.

They may simply be experimenting with what happens when they say something that is not true.

But sometimes, the child's question is very simple:

“What will happen to me if I tell the truth?”

And that question matters.

Because if the child believes that telling the truth will always make the situation much worse, lying can become an escape.

Not a good escape.

Not an acceptable escape.

But an escape.

That distinction becomes very important later.

A Small Example From Home

Let's say your nine-year-old takes your phone after you clearly said no.

You ask:

"Did you use my phone?"

"No."

You already know they did.

So you ask again.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

Now you are angry.

"Why are you lying to me?"

The child keeps saying no.

You get louder.

The child gets more defensive.

Eventually, the truth comes out.

Now you are dealing with **two problems**:

1. The child used the phone without permission.
2. The child lied about it.

But the conversation has become so focused on the lie that the original behaviour almost disappears.

This is where I want us to start thinking differently.

What if you could deal with the phone problem **and** teach your child that telling you the truth is still possible when they have done something wrong?

That does not mean:

"It's okay to use the phone because you told the truth."

No.

The child can still face a consequence.

The difference is in the message:

“You are responsible for what you did. But you can always come back to the truth.”

That is a powerful message for a child to hear.

The Difference Between a Mistake and a Pattern

Now, before we go further, let's make one thing clear.

Every child will not tell the truth every single time.

Children are still learning.

They are learning how to handle fear.

They are learning how to admit mistakes.

They are learning how to deal with shame.

They are learning that actions have consequences.

So one lie does not mean you have a dishonest child.

But repeated lying deserves attention.

Especially when you notice a pattern.

For example:

- The child lies whenever homework comes up.
- The child lies whenever something gets broken.
- The child lies to avoid chores.
- The child lies about screen time.
- The child lies even when the truth would be easier.
- The child keeps changing the story after being asked.

When you see a pattern, don't just ask:

“How do I stop this lie?”

Start asking:

“What keeps happening around the lie?”

That question will take us somewhere much more useful.

Your First Job Is Not to Fix It

I know that sounds strange.

You bought this guide because you want a solution.

But before you change your response, I want you to become a detective for a moment.

Not the angry kind.

The calm kind.

For the next day, notice one lying incident.

Write down five things.

1. What happened just before the lie?

Was the child caught doing something?

Were they worried about homework?

Did you ask about money?

Did a sibling complain?

2. What exactly did the child say?

Write the words down if you can.

Don't add your opinion yet.

3. What did you do immediately?

Did you shout?

Ask again?

Threaten punishment?

Stay calm?

Walk away?

4. What happened after the truth came out?

Was there a consequence?

A lecture?

An apology?

A long argument?

Did everyone move on?

5. What do you think your child was trying to avoid?

This is the important one.

Maybe it was punishment.

Maybe embarrassment.

Maybe disappointment.

Maybe losing a privilege.

Maybe simply getting into trouble.

You may not know the answer yet.

That's okay.

We're collecting clues, not judging the child.

Try This Tonight

The next time your child tells you something that sounds untrue, resist the urge to immediately prove that you are smarter than them.

I know.

That can be hard.

Especially when you already know the truth.

Instead, take one breath.

Then say:

"I don't want you to make up another story. Tell me what really happened, and we'll deal with it."

Then stop talking.

Give them a moment.

You may be surprised by what happens when you stop filling the silence.

And if they still lie?

Don't panic.

This is not a magic sentence.

We are changing a pattern, not performing a trick.

For now, simply notice what happens.

One More Thing Before We Move On

Please don't use this chapter as a reason to stop having rules.

Your child still needs boundaries.

Your child still needs consequences.

Your child still needs to learn that actions have results.

The goal is not to make lying consequence-free.

The goal is to stop making honesty feel like the worst possible choice.

That is a very different thing.

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this:

Your child's lie is behaviour you need to address. It is not a permanent label for who your child is.

And before we can change the behaviour, we need to understand the cycle around it.

Because here's where things get interesting.

Sometimes, without meaning to, **we can create a situation where telling the truth feels harder than telling the lie.**

That's the part most parents never get shown.

And once you see that cycle, the way you respond to the next “I didn't do it” can change completely.

That's exactly what we're getting into next.

Chapter 2

The More You Push for the Truth, the More They Hide It

Now you know the first important piece: **your child's lie is a behaviour, not a permanent label.**

And you also started looking at what happens around the lie instead of only staring at the lie itself.

Good.

Because now we're getting to the uncomfortable part.

Sometimes, the way we chase the truth can accidentally make the child more determined to hide it.

I know that sounds backwards.

You're probably thinking, *"Gbemi, if I don't push, how will my child learn to tell the truth?"*

Fair question.

Stay with me.

The Question Behind the Question

Let's go back to that broken cup.

You walk into the kitchen.

You see the pieces on the floor.

You ask:

"Who broke this?"

Your child says:

"I don't know."

You look at them.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Don't lie to me."

"I'm not lying."

"I know you did it."

"No, I didn't."

Now your blood is getting hot.

The child is getting tense.

And suddenly, this isn't about a cup anymore.

It becomes a battle over **who will give in first**.

You want the truth.

Your child wants to avoid what they think will happen after the truth.

So they hold on tighter.

This is where many parents get stuck.

They think:

"My child is lying because I am not being strict enough."

So they become stricter.

The child becomes more afraid of the next confrontation.

So the child hides more.

The parent sees more hiding.

So the parent becomes even stricter.

And round and round it goes.

This is the cycle we need to break.

Imagine You Are the Child for a Moment

Let's make this very simple.

Imagine you are nine years old.

You have broken something in the house.

You know Mum or Dad will be upset.

You also know you will probably lose your tablet for three days.

Maybe there will be shouting.

Maybe there will be a long lecture.

Maybe the mistake will be mentioned again tomorrow.

Maybe your parent will say:

“See? This is why I can't trust you.”

Now I ask you:

Would telling the truth feel easy?

Probably not.

That does not make the lie right.

It simply helps us understand why the child may choose it.

And understanding the reason is important because **we cannot change a pattern we refuse to understand.**

This Is Where the Truth-Safety Loop™ Begins

Remember the framework we are building around this guide?

This is the first stage.

ANTICIPATE

Before the lie comes out, the child may already be thinking:

“What is going to happen if they find out?”

That thought can happen very quickly.

The child may not sit down and carefully plan it.

It can be almost automatic.

Something goes wrong.

They see the parent's face.

They remember what happened last time.

Then the brain looks for an escape.

And sometimes the escape is:

“I didn't do it.”

This is why I want you to stop thinking only about the sentence your child says.

Look one step earlier.

What did your child expect would happen if they told the truth?

That question changes everything.

The Truth Is Not the Same as No Consequences

This part matters so much that I want you to read it twice.

Making honesty safer does not mean removing consequences.

If your child takes your phone without permission, there can still be a consequence.

If your child damages something on purpose, there can still be a consequence.

If your child refuses to do homework, you can still deal with the homework.

If your child breaks a family rule, the rule still matters.

We are not throwing the rules out.

We are changing the message around honesty.

Instead of:

“If you tell me the truth, I will destroy you.”

the message becomes:

“If you tell me the truth, we will deal with what happened. You will still be responsible, but you don't need to hide from me.”

That is a much healthier lesson.

Your child learns two things at once:

Actions have consequences.

And:

I can tell my parent the truth.

You don't have to sacrifice one to teach the other.

What We Often Get Wrong

Here's what most parents are trying to do when they push hard for a confession:

They want to teach honesty.

But the child may experience something else.

They may experience:

“I need to say the right thing so this person stops being angry.”

Those are very different lessons.

One teaches honesty.

The other teaches **how to survive an interrogation.**

And children can become surprisingly good at the second one.

They learn to give half-answers.

They change small details.

They blame a sibling.

They say:

"I forgot."

"I don't know."

"I can't remember."

"They told me to do it."

Then the parent gets even more frustrated.

Now you've got a bigger mess.

The Nigerian Parent Trap

Let's be honest.

Many of us grew up around strong discipline.

If you did something wrong, you knew very quickly.

Sometimes one look from Mum was enough.

Sometimes Dad did not even need to raise his voice.

You knew.

And there is value in teaching children respect and boundaries.

But we also need to notice that **the world our children are growing up in is not exactly the same world we grew up in.**

A child who is scared to tell you that they broke a plate may not become more honest simply because you shout louder.

They may become better at hiding mistakes.

Think about NEPA taking light just when you've finally put the iron on the shirt for an important event.

You don't solve that problem by staring at the socket and shouting at it.

You need to change what you do next.

The same idea applies here.

When the old response keeps producing the same result, sometimes the answer is not **more force**.

Sometimes the answer is a different response.

The Escalation Trap

Here is how the cycle can look.

Child makes a mistake.

↓

Parent asks what happened.

↓

Child gets scared or embarrassed.

↓

Child lies.

↓

Parent notices the lie.

↓

Parent becomes angry.

↓

Child becomes more defensive.

↓

Parent asks more questions.

↓

Child tells more lies or changes the story.

↓

Parent becomes even angrier.

↓

Child learns that admitting the truth can lead to a very difficult experience.

That last part is the one I want you to notice.

The parent thinks:

“I need to make lying more painful.”

But the child may already believe:

“Telling the truth is painful.”

That is why simply increasing punishment may not solve the problem.

So What Do We Do Instead?

We start separating two things that have become tangled together.

The truth.

And.

The behaviour.

Let's say your child secretly uses your phone.

You know they used it.

Instead of spending ten minutes trying to force a confession, you can say:

“I know you used my phone. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me what happened.”

Then listen.

If the child says:

“Okay. I used it.”

You can respond:

“Thank you for telling me the truth. You still broke the rule, so we're going to deal with that.”

Simple.

No celebration.

No pretending the rule doesn't matter.

No:

“Because you told the truth, you are free to go.”

Just a clear separation.

Truth acknowledged.

Behaviour addressed.

That is the foundation of the system.

What If They Still Lie?

They might.

Don't expect one new sentence to undo a pattern that has been building for months.

This is not a magic trick.

If your child says:

“I didn't use it.”

And you know they did, you don't have to spend the next twenty minutes proving your case.

You can calmly say:

“I'm not going to argue with you about it. I have enough information. When you're ready to tell me what really happened, we can talk.”

Then stop.

That silence can feel strange at first.

You're used to chasing the answer.

But sometimes chasing makes the child dig in deeper.

You are giving them a door back to the truth.

Try This Three-Step Shift

The next time you catch your child in a lie, try this:

Step 1: State What You Know

Don't make a dramatic speech.

Say what you know.

“I saw the wrapper in your room.”

or:

“Your teacher sent me a message, so I know there was homework.”

Step 2: Invite the Truth

Say:

“You don't need to make up another story. Tell me what happened.”

Step 3: Deal With the Behaviour

Once the truth is clear:

“Thank you for telling me. Now let's deal with what you did.”

That is it.

You don't need a courtroom.

You don't need twenty questions.

You don't need to prove that you are the smartest person in the room.

You're the parent.

Your job is to guide the child.

What If the Child Says, “But You Will Beat Me”?

This needs care.

If your child says they are afraid of being hit or seriously hurt, don't brush that aside.

Pause and take the concern seriously.

The approach in this guide is about building honest communication and fair boundaries. It is **not** about using fear or violence to control your child.

Your child should be able to make a mistake and still have a safe way to come to Mom or Dad for help.

If there are serious safety concerns at home, or your child is afraid of physical harm, this is bigger than a simple lying strategy and needs appropriate professional support for the family as a whole.

Your New Question

From today, I want you to replace one question.

Instead of always asking:

“How do I punish this lie?”

ask:

“What happened between the mistake and the lie?”

That is your new detective question.

Maybe you will discover your child is mostly lying about homework.

Maybe it's screen time.

Maybe it's food.

Maybe it happens when a sibling is involved.

Maybe it happens when your child expects a big reaction from you.

You are looking for the pattern.

Because once we understand the pattern, we can change it.

And that brings us to the biggest shift in the whole guide.

You do **not** have to choose between being a soft parent who lets everything slide and a harsh parent whose child is afraid to speak.

There is a middle path.

You can be firm about behaviour **and** make honesty safer.

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this:

Your child does not need to learn that telling the truth removes consequences. Your child needs to learn that telling the truth does not make the situation worse than the behaviour already did.

That is the difference between rewarding honesty and excusing wrongdoing.

And now we're ready to put a name to the cycle we've been talking about.

In the next chapter, I'll show you the **Truth-Safety Loop™** step by step, the five-part pattern that can turn one small mistake into another lie, another argument, and another loss of trust. Once you can see the loop, you can finally see exactly where to break it.

Chapter 3

Meet the Truth-Safety Loop™ — The Real Battle Happens Before the Lie

Now you know why pushing harder for a confession can sometimes make things worse.

You also know the important difference between **giving a consequence** and **making honesty feel unsafe**.

Good.

Now let's put the whole pattern together.

Because once you can see what happens before, during, and after the lie, you stop feeling like you're fighting a mysterious problem.

You can finally see where to step in.

I call this pattern the **Truth-Safety Loop™**.

It has five parts:

ANTICIPATE → ESCAPE → DISCOVER → ESCALATE → RESET

Let's walk through it.

1. ANTICIPATE: “What Will Happen If I Tell the Truth?”

This happens before your child says anything.

Something goes wrong.

Maybe they broke something.

Maybe they didn't do their homework.

Maybe they used the tablet when they were told not to.

Maybe they took something without asking.

Before they answer you, they may already be thinking:

“What will Mum or Dad do when they find out?”

That thought can happen very quickly.

Your child may remember the last time something similar happened.

Maybe there was shouting.

Maybe a privilege was removed.

Maybe there was a long lecture.

Maybe you were disappointed.

Maybe you said:

“I can't trust you anymore.”

The child remembers that.

So when the next mistake happens, they don't only think about the mistake.

They think about **what comes next**.

This is the first part of the loop.

The Cost-of-Truth Question

Here's something I want you to start asking yourself:

“What does my child think telling me the truth will cost them?”

Not what you *intend* it to cost.

What your child **expects**.

Those can be two very different things.

You may think:

“I'm just correcting my child.”

Your child may experience:

“If I tell Dad what happened, I'm going to be in serious trouble.”

That difference matters.

2. ESCAPE: “Maybe I Can Make This Go Away”

Now the child has a problem.

They want to avoid the uncomfortable thing they expect is coming.

So they look for an escape.

Sometimes that escape is:

“I didn't do it.”

Or:

“I don't know.”

Or:

“My brother did it.”

Or:

“The teacher didn't give us homework.”

Or:

“I only used it for five minutes.”

The child has discovered something simple:

The lie may delay the uncomfortable moment.

Notice the word **delay**.

The lie doesn't really solve the problem.

It simply creates space between the mistake and the consequence.

And that can be enough for a child to keep using it.

This is why simply telling a child:

“Lying is bad!”

may not be enough.

The child already knows the rule.

What they may not know is how to handle the uncomfortable moment that comes before telling the truth.

3. DISCOVER: “I Know You Did It”

Now you find out.

Maybe you saw what happened.

Maybe a teacher called.

Maybe a sibling told you.

Maybe you found the evidence.

Maybe the story simply doesn't make sense.

You ask again.

Your child denies it.

You ask again.

They deny it again.

Now you know the lie is happening.

And this is usually where the parent's emotions take over.

You think:

“So you are lying to my face now?”

That's a painful moment.

I understand it.

Because you're not only dealing with the original behaviour anymore.

You feel disrespected.

You feel challenged.

You may even feel embarrassed.

And that's when the fourth part of the loop can begin.

4. ESCALATE: “Now We're Both Digging In”

You get angry.

Your voice gets louder.

The questions become sharper.

Your child becomes more defensive.

You ask:

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Look at me.”

“I am looking at you.”

“Don't lie!”

“I'm not lying!”

Now both sides are digging in.

You want the truth.

Your child wants to escape the pressure.

So you push.

They defend.

You push harder.

They defend harder.

And suddenly, the original mistake is no longer the main issue.

The conversation becomes a fight about **the story**.

This is the part I want you to watch closely.

Because the parent may walk away thinking:

“My child is becoming more dishonest.”

But the child may walk away thinking:

“Next time, I need to hide this better.”

That is how the loop can strengthen.

Then Comes the RESET

This is where things can change.

The reset is not:

“Let my child get away with it.”

It is not:

“Never punish your child again.”

And it is definitely not:

“Believe everything your child says.”

The reset is much simpler.

You separate **truth-telling** from **the behaviour itself**.

You tell your child:

“You are still responsible for what you did. But you don't need to lie to me about it.”

That's the message.

Let's see what that looks like in real life.

Example 1: The Homework Lie

You ask:

“Did you finish your homework?”

“Yes.”

You check.

It isn't done.

The old approach might be:

“Why did you lie to me? How many times have I told you? You are becoming very stubborn!”

The new approach starts differently.

“I can see the homework isn't done. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me what happened.”

Your child says:

“I forgot.”

You respond:

“Thank you for telling me. Now let's work out how you're going to finish it.”

Notice what happened.

You didn't say:

“Good job! You didn't do your homework but you told the truth!”

No.

The homework still matters.

But you also didn't turn honesty into another crime.

The truth opened the door to solving the real problem.

Example 2: The Broken Cup

You hear something crash.

You walk into the kitchen.

Your child says:

"It wasn't me."

You already suspect they did it.

Instead of starting a long argument, you say:

"I need you to tell me what really happened. Breaking the cup is one problem. Hiding what happened is another. Let's deal with both."

Now you've separated the issues.

Your child may still deny it.

That's okay.

Stay calm.

You don't have to win the argument in thirty seconds.

You can say:

"I'm not going to argue with you. When you're ready to tell me what happened, we'll talk."

Then deal with the mess and the safety issue.

Later, when the child admits it, acknowledge the truth.

"I'm glad you told me. Now let's clean this up together, and we'll talk about the rule."

That is a reset.

Example 3: The Screen-Time Lie

You told your child:

“No phone after 8 p.m.”

At 9 p.m., you find them watching a video.

“Were you using the phone?”

“No.”

You know.

The old loop starts:

“Don't lie.”

“I'm not lying.”

“I saw you!”

“No, you didn't.”

Now everybody is upset.

The reset sounds more like:

“I saw you using the phone after 8. You don't need to argue with me about that. Tell me what happened.”

If the child admits it:

“Thank you for telling me. You still broke the screen rule, so there will be a consequence. But I appreciate you telling me the truth.”

Again:

Truth acknowledged.

Rule enforced.

That combination is the heart of this method.

The Five-Part Loop at a Glance

Keep this simple.

Stage	What may be happening
ANTICIPATE	“What will happen if I tell the truth?”
ESCAPE	“Maybe I can avoid the problem by denying it.”
DISCOVER	“My parent knows something is wrong.”
ESCALATE	Parent pushes harder; child becomes more defensive.
RESET	Truth is invited while the behaviour still has consequences.

You don't need to memorize a textbook definition.

Just remember the flow.

Before the lie.

The lie.

The discovery.

The fight.

The reset.

That's enough.

Your Job Is to Find the Weak Spot

Here's where this gets practical.

You don't have to change everything at once.

Look at the five stages and ask:

Where does my family usually get stuck?

Maybe your child lies because they expect a huge reaction.

Then **ANTICIPATE** needs attention.

Maybe they lie because it has worked before.

Then **ESCAPE** needs attention.

Maybe you turn every discovery into an interrogation.

Then **DISCOVER** and **ESCALATE** need attention.

Maybe you already stay calm, but you don't know how to respond after your child tells the truth.

Then **RESET** needs attention.

This is good news.

Because you don't have to become a completely different parent overnight.

You just need to find the part of the loop you can change first.

Your Truth-Safety Loop Exercise

Take a piece of paper.

Write down the last lie you remember.

Then complete these five lines.

ANTICIPATE:

What do I think my child expected would happen if they told the truth?

ESCAPE:

What did my child say or do to avoid the problem?

DISCOVER:

How did I find out?

ESCALATE:

What did I do after I discovered the lie?

RESET:

What could I do differently next time?

Don't judge yourself.

Don't write:

"I'm a terrible parent."

That doesn't help.

You're looking for information.

If you discover that you shout when you're angry, write it down.

If you discover that you ask the same question ten times, write it down.

If you discover that your child usually lies when they fear losing a privilege, write it down.

Clarity comes before change.

One Important Warning

Don't turn the Truth-Safety Loop™ into another weapon.

Please don't say:

"See? You lie because you're scared of me."

That can create a new argument.

Instead, use the framework to understand the situation quietly.

Your child does not need a lecture about the loop.

You need to understand the loop so you can respond better.

That's the point.

And remember: this framework is not saying that every child's lying is caused by fear of punishment.

It is a practical way to examine the interaction around recurring everyday lies.

Some children lie for other reasons.

The goal is to find the pattern in **your** home.

The One Sentence I Want You to Keep

If you forget everything else from this chapter, remember this:

“You are responsible for what you did, but you are always allowed to come back to the truth.”

That sentence carries both sides of good parenting.

Firmness and **connection**.

You don't have to choose.

Now we have the map.

We can see how the cycle starts, how it grows, and where we can interrupt it.

But knowing the loop is only half the job.

The next question is the one every parent asks:

“Okay, but what do I actually say when my child finally tells me the truth?”

Because this is where many parents accidentally send a mixed message.

They say they want honesty, but when honesty finally arrives, they react as if the confession itself is another offence.

In the next chapter, we'll fix that.

We're going to install the **Truth Before Trouble™ Rule** the simple response that lets you stay firm about the behaviour while teaching your child that **telling you the truth is still worth it**.

Chapter 4

The Truth Before Trouble™ Rule: “You Can Still Be in Trouble and Tell Me the Truth”

Now you can see the Truth-Safety Loop™ clearly.

Your child may anticipate your reaction, try to escape the uncomfortable moment, get caught, and then the whole thing can turn into a battle.

But there is one place where you have a huge amount of control.

The moment your child finally tells you the truth.

That moment matters more than most parents realise.

Because if your child finally says:

“Okay, Mum. I did it.”

what happens next teaches them something.

They are watching you.

They're thinking:

“Was telling the truth a good idea?”

And this is where we bring in the **Truth Before Trouble™ Rule**.

It is very simple:

Acknowledge the truth first. Deal with the behaviour second.

That's it.

But don't underestimate it.

This small change can completely alter the message your child receives.

“But They Still Did Something Wrong!”

Exactly.

That's the point.

Let's say your child takes ₦2,000 from your wallet without asking.

They deny it.

Later, they admit:

“Okay. I took it.”

You don't say:

“That's fine. At least you told the truth.”

No.

The money was still taken without permission.

There still needs to be a conversation.

There may still need to be a consequence.

But instead of treating the confession as another offence, you say:

“I'm glad you told me the truth. Taking the money was wrong, and we're still going to deal with that.”

Do you see the difference?

You have just taught two lessons at the same time:

Taking what isn't yours is wrong.

And:

Telling the truth is the right way to deal with what you did.

That's what we want.

Truth Is Not a Get-Out-of-Jail Card

This is where some parents get worried.

They hear “make honesty safer” and think:

“So my child can just confess and escape punishment?”

No.

Not at all.

Imagine a football match where the referee says:

“You committed a foul, but because you admitted it, there are no rules anymore.”

That would make no sense.

The same thing applies at home.

Honesty does not erase responsibility.

It simply gives your child a healthier way to face responsibility.

Your child can say:

“I broke the rule.”

And you can say:

“Thank you for being honest. Now let's deal with the rule you broke.”

That is firm parenting.

You haven't become weak.

You have become clearer.

The Old Order vs. The New Order

Let's compare them.

The old pattern:

Wrong action → Lie → Parent catches lie → Anger → Confession → Bigger punishment

The child may learn:

“I should have hidden it better.”

Now look at the new pattern:

The Truth Before Trouble™ pattern:

Wrong action → Lie → Parent calmly invites truth → Child admits it → Truth acknowledged → Behaviour addressed → Repair

The lesson becomes:

“I can tell the truth even when I've done something wrong.”

That is the behaviour we want to build.

What Should You Say When They Tell the Truth?

You don't need fancy words.

In fact, simple is better.

Here are some phrases you can use.

When your child admits a small mistake:

“Thank you for telling me.”

Then:

“Now let's fix what happened.”

When the mistake is more serious:

“I'm glad you told me. What you did still matters, so we're going to talk about it.”

When they confess after lying first:

“I appreciate you telling me the truth now. Let's work out what happened.”

When they look scared:

“You can tell me the truth. I may not like what happened, but I need to know what really happened.”

That last sentence is powerful.

Because you're not promising:

“Nothing bad will happen.”

You're promising something more honest:

“You can come back to the truth.”

What You Should NOT Say

Sometimes what we don't say matters just as much.

Your child finally admits:

“I took the biscuits.”

Try not to respond with:

“I knew it! I knew you were lying!”

That puts all the attention back on the battle.

Avoid:

“So you finally decided to tell the truth?”

That can make the confession feel like a defeat.

Avoid:

“See? You can't be trusted.”

That turns one behaviour into a statement about the child's identity.

And be careful with:

“If you had told me from the beginning, you wouldn't be in trouble.”

Only say this if it is actually true.

If the child would still face a consequence, be honest.

You don't want to create another reason for your child to doubt what you say.

The Three-Part Truth Response

Here's the simple formula I want you to practise.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE

“Thank you for telling me.”

2. ADDRESS

“What happened was not okay.”

3. ACT

“Now let's decide what needs to happen next.”

That's the whole thing.

Acknowledge. Address. Act.

You can use it for almost any everyday situation.

Let's See It in Real Life

Situation: Homework

Your child says:

"I didn't do the homework because I forgot."

You say:

"Thank you for telling me. The homework still needs to be done. Let's work out when you'll finish it."

No long speech.

No drama.

The child learns responsibility.

Situation: Broken Charger

Your child says:

"Mum, I broke your charger."

You say:

"Thank you for telling me. I know that wasn't easy to admit. Let's see if it can be fixed, and we'll talk about how to replace it if it can't."

The child learns:

Mistakes can be repaired.

Situation: Screen Time

Your child says:

"I used the phone after you told me not to."

You say:

"I'm glad you told me. You still broke the screen rule, so there will be a consequence. But I appreciate that you told me the truth."

Again:

Truth acknowledged.

Rule enforced.

What If Your Child Confesses After Lying?

This one can be tricky.

You may be thinking:

“But they already lied to my face! Why should I thank them now?”

Because the new behaviour you want to build is the moment they **return to the truth**.

Imagine your child says:

“Okay. Okay. I did it.”

You can say:

“Thank you for telling me now. I want you to practise coming to the truth sooner next time.”

Then deal with the original behaviour.

You don't have to pretend the first lie didn't happen.

But you also don't want to teach:

“Once you lie, there is no point telling the truth anymore.”

That's the opposite of what we're trying to build.

What About Consequences?

Good question.

Consequences should still make sense.

The consequence should be connected to the behaviour when possible.

For example:

Child makes a mess deliberately

Consequence: Help clean it.

Child misuses a device

Consequence: Temporary loss or reduction of device access may be appropriate.

Child damages something through carelessness

Consequence: Help repair, replace, or make amends where reasonable.

Child refuses a responsibility

Consequence: The responsibility still gets completed.

The key is this:

Don't create a huge punishment simply because the child admitted the truth.

Otherwise, the child learns:

“Next time, keep your mouth shut.”

That's exactly what we don't want.

Don't Punish the Confession

This is one of the biggest rules in this entire guide.

If your child comes to you voluntarily and says:

“Mum, I did something wrong.”

Stop and notice that moment.

Don't immediately explode.

You can be upset.

You can be firm.

But take a second.

That child just made a difficult choice.

They could have hidden it.

They could have blamed someone else.

They could have stayed quiet.

Instead, they came to you.

That is the behaviour we want to see more often.

So tell them:

“I'm glad you came and told me.”

Then deal with the problem.

That sentence may feel small.

But repeated over time, it can change what your child expects from honesty.

The Cost-of-Truth Test

Now let's make this personal.

Think about the last time your child told you something they had done wrong.

What happened immediately after?

Did you:

- Shout?
- Ask why they did something so foolish?
- Bring up five old mistakes?
- Threaten a very large punishment?
- Give a fair consequence?
- Help them fix it?
- Acknowledge that they told you?

Be honest.

There is no prize for getting this exercise “right.”

We're trying to see what your child has learned.

If your child thinks:

“When I tell Mum the truth, I get punished, shouted at, and reminded of everything I've ever done wrong,”

then truth has a high emotional cost.

Again, that does not mean you caused every lie.

It means you now have something you can change.

The 5-Question Cost-of-Truth Audit™

Take five minutes tonight.

Answer these questions.

Question 1

What usually happens when my child tells me something I don't want to hear?

Write the honest answer.

Question 2

Do I react to the truth before I deal with the behaviour?

Yes or no.

Question 3

Do I make my child's mistake bigger by bringing up old mistakes?

Yes or no.

Question 4

Does my child know what consequence to expect when they break a rule?

Yes or no.

Question 5

If my child told me the truth tomorrow about something serious, would they know they could still come to me?

Sit with that one.

Don't rush past it.

A Small Change That Can Make a Big Difference

You don't have to change your whole parenting style tonight.

Start with one sentence.

The next time your child tells you the truth about something they did wrong, say:

“Thank you for telling me. Now let's deal with what happened.”

Then follow through.

That's it.

Do it again.

And again.

Over time, your child gets a new experience.

Truth doesn't mean:

“I won't face consequences.”

Truth means:

“I can face the consequences without having to hide first.”

That is a much healthier lesson.

But What If They Don't Tell the Truth?

This is where parents often panic.

You tried the new approach.

Your child still lies.

You think:

“See? It doesn't work.”

Slow down.

Remember what we're doing.

We are changing a pattern.

If your child has been lying for months, you should not expect one calm response to erase that habit.

Stay consistent.

When you know the truth, state what you know.

Invite honesty.

Don't get trapped in endless questioning.

And when the child eventually tells the truth, **notice the return to honesty.**

You're building a new path.

Your Practice for Today

Before we move on, practise these three sentences out loud.

Yes, actually say them.

Sentence 1

“Thank you for telling me.”

Sentence 2

“What happened still needs to be dealt with.”

Sentence 3

“Let’s work out what happens next.”

Say them until they feel natural.

Because when your child is standing in front of you with that guilty face, your brain may want to produce a completely different speech.

You may want to say:

“After everything I’ve done for you...”

Don’t.

Not yet.

Take a breath.

Remember the rule.

Truth first. Trouble second.

So here’s what I want you to carry forward:

You don’t reward the wrongdoing. You reinforce the honesty that makes responsibility possible.

And once your child starts talking, you need to know exactly how to keep that conversation from turning into another argument.

Because even when your child tells the truth, there are moments when you can accidentally push them right back into hiding.

That’s why the next chapter matters.

I’m going to give you the **3-Response Architecture™** three simple responses for the three moments parents face most: when your child tells the truth, when you know they’re lying, and when they keep changing the story.

That is the part you can keep beside you and use in the real world, even when everybody is tired and emotions are high.

Chapter 5

Stop the Interrogation: The 3 Responses That Change the Conversation

So now you know the **Truth Before Trouble™ Rule**.

You can acknowledge the truth without pretending the behaviour was okay.

You can stay firm without making your child feel that admitting a mistake was the worst decision they could have made.

But here's where things get interesting.

Knowing the rule is one thing.

Knowing what to say when you're standing there, looking at your child, is another thing entirely.

Because real life doesn't happen when everyone is calm.

It happens when you're tired.

You're rushing to work.

The children are arguing.

Your phone is ringing.

Someone has spilled Milo on the floor.

And then you discover that your child has done the exact thing you told them not to do.

That is when you need something simple.

Not a speech.

Not a parenting seminar.

A response you can actually remember.

That's why I use the **3-Response Architecture™**.

It gives you three different responses for three different situations:

TRUTH → GUIDE

LIE → STATE

STORY CHANGES → STOP

Let's break it down.

Response One: When Your Child Tells the Truth

This is the easiest one to get wrong.

Your child comes to you and says:

“Mum, I broke the cup.”

Your first reaction may be:

“Why did you touch it?”

“Didn't I tell you not to?”

“How many times have I warned you?”

Stop.

Remember Chapter 4.

Truth first. Trouble second.

Start with:

“Thank you for telling me.”

Then:

“Tell me what happened.”

Then:

“Okay. Let's work out what needs to happen now.”

That's the **GUIDE** response.

You're not taking over the child's responsibility.

You're helping them face it.

Why “Tell Me What Happened” Matters

Notice the difference between these two questions.

Question A:

“Why did you do that?”

Question B:

“What happened?”

Question A can sound like an accusation.

Question B opens the door.

A child who already feels guilty may not know how to answer:

“Why did you do that?”

They may hear:

“Give me a good reason for your bad behaviour.”

But:

“What happened?”

is easier.

It invites facts.

And facts are useful.

Maybe your child was careless.

Maybe they were copying a sibling.

Maybe they didn't understand the rule.

Maybe they were angry.

Maybe they made a poor choice.

You don't have to decide all of that in the first ten seconds.

First, get the truth.

Then teach.

Response Two: When You Know They're Lying

This is the one that will probably test you.

You ask:

"Did you use my phone?"

"No."

But you saw your child holding it.

What do you do?

The old response is often:

"Don't lie to me!"

Then:

"I know you used it!"

Then:

"Look at me!"

Then:

"Tell me the truth!"

Then:

“Are you sure?”

Then:

“I'm giving you one last chance.”

And somehow, five minutes later, you're both angry.

Let's stop doing that.

When you know enough to know what happened, **you don't need to interrogate your child into submission.**

Use the **STATE** response.

Say:

“I know you used the phone. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me what happened.”

Then wait.

That's it.

You have stated what you know.

You have invited the truth.

Now give your child space to choose it.

What If They Say, “No, I Didn't”?

Stay calm.

This is where you may want to prove that you are right.

Don't turn it into a competition.

Say:

“I'm not going to argue about what I already know. When you're ready to tell me what happened, we can talk.”

Then stop.

You don't have to keep repeating yourself.

You don't have to raise your voice.

You don't have to produce twelve witnesses.

Your job is not to win the argument.

Your job is to teach the child how to handle the situation.

That is a very different job.

But What If They Think I'm Being Weak?

You may worry about that.

Maybe you're thinking:

"If I don't shout, my child will think I'm scared."

No.

Calm does not mean weak.

In fact, calm can make your message clearer.

Think about a good traffic officer.

They don't need to scream at every driver to enforce a rule.

The instruction is clear.

The consequence is clear.

You keep moving.

At home, the same principle can work.

Clear beats loud.

Response Three: When the Story Keeps Changing

Now we come to the tricky one.

Your child says:

"I didn't take it."

Then:

"Okay, I took it but I didn't use it."

Then:

"Actually, my brother gave it to me."

Then:

"Fine, I used it for one minute."

Now the story has changed four times.

This is where many parents lose it.

But I want you to try something different.

Use the **STOP** response.

Say:

"The story keeps changing, so we're going to stop here. When you're ready to tell me the full truth, we can continue."

That's it.

You are ending the argument.

You are not ending the relationship.

You are not saying:

"Forget it."

You're saying:

“I’m not going to keep participating in this back-and-forth.”

That’s powerful.

The Three Responses Together

Let’s put them side by side.

Situation	Your response	Your goal
Child tells the truth	GUIDE — “Thank you. Tell me what happened.”	Help them face responsibility
You know they’re lying	STATE — “I know what happened. Tell me the truth.”	Avoid an interrogation
Story keeps changing	STOP — “We’ll continue when you’re ready to tell the truth.”	End the argument

You don’t need to remember long scripts.

Remember:

GUIDE. STATE. STOP.

The 10-Second Rule

Here’s another trick I found useful.

When you hear something that makes you angry, give yourself **10 seconds before responding**.

Not ten minutes.

Just ten seconds.

Take a breath.

Put down whatever is in your hand.

Look at your child.

Then choose your response.

Why?

Because your first reaction is often emotional.

Your second reaction can be intentional.

And parenting gets much easier when you stop letting your first emotion make every decision.

What About “Look Into My Eyes”?

Some parents believe a child must look directly at them to prove they are telling the truth.

But eye contact alone doesn't tell you whether someone is honest.

A nervous child may look away.

A confident child may look directly at you and still lie.

So don't make eye contact your lie detector.

Instead, focus on:

What happened?

What does the child say happened?

What evidence do you have?

What needs to happen next?

That keeps the conversation grounded.

Don't Ask Questions You Already Know the Answer To

This one can save you a lot of stress.

If you saw your child take the biscuit, don't ask:

“Did you take the biscuit?”

You already know.

Instead:

“I saw you take the biscuit after I said no. Tell me what happened.”

See the difference?

The second sentence removes the courtroom game.

You're not asking the child to decide whether you're smart enough to know the truth.

You're telling them:

“I know what happened. Now let's talk about it.”

Don't Set Traps

Another common habit is setting a trap.

You already know your child took something.

You hide the evidence.

Then you ask:

“Did you take it?”

They say no.

You reveal the evidence.

“Got you!”

You may feel victorious for about three seconds.

But ask yourself:

What did the child just learn?

Maybe:

“Mum is trying to catch me.”

That is not the lesson we want.

We want:

“Mum wants the truth, and I can tell him what happened.”

There will be times when you need to investigate something serious.

That's different.

But for everyday parenting problems, don't turn your home into a detective show.

A Realistic Example

Let's say your 12-year-old is allowed to play games after homework.

You come into the room.

Homework isn't done.

The game is running.

You ask:

“Did you play before finishing your homework?”

“No.”

You saw the screen.

Here's how the three responses work.

STATE

“I saw the game running. You don't need to tell me another story. Tell me what happened.”

Child:

"I only played for a little while."

You:

"Okay. Thank you for telling me. You still broke the rule, so let's deal with the homework and the screen."

Now you're done.

No 25-minute argument.

No character attack.

No:

"You're just like your uncle."

No bringing up something that happened three months ago.

One problem. One response. One consequence.

What If the Child Says, "You Never Believe Me"?

Don't rush to defend yourself.

You can say:

"I want to believe you. That's why I need you to tell me the truth, even when the truth is uncomfortable."

That's a strong message.

You're not saying:

"I believe everything you say."

You're saying:

"I want honesty to be part of how we solve problems."

What If They Start Crying?

Let them cry.

Crying doesn't automatically mean they're manipulating you.

It can simply mean they're overwhelmed.

You can say:

“It's okay to be upset. Take a moment. We'll talk when you're ready.”

You don't have to cancel the consequence.

You don't have to rush the conversation.

And you don't have to shout over the crying.

Sometimes the best parenting move is simply to slow everything down.

What If They Blame Their Sibling?

This happens a lot.

“It's not my fault. She told me to do it.”

Don't immediately start investigating the whole family tree.

Say:

“You can tell me what your sister did, but I also want you to tell me what you chose to do.”

That teaches responsibility without ignoring the other person's role.

If both children were involved, deal with both.

But don't allow blame to become an escape route.

The Parent's Secret Weapon: Silence

This may be the hardest one.

Silence.

After you ask:

“Tell me what happened.”

Stop talking.

Don't rescue the child from the silence.

Don't immediately ask another question.

Don't give them three possible answers.

Wait.

Sometimes children need a few seconds to decide whether they are ready to tell the truth.

And yes, those few seconds can feel like one full hour when you're standing there.

But stay with it.

Silence can create room for honesty.

Your Practice Challenge

For the next few days, practise the three responses.

Don't wait for a huge problem.

Use them with small things.

If your child tells the truth:

GUIDE

“Thank you for telling me. Tell me what happened.”

If you know they're lying:

STATE

"I know what happened. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me the truth."

If the story keeps changing:

STOP

"We're going to pause here. When you're ready to tell me the full truth, we'll continue."

You don't have to say these exact words every time.

Make them sound like you.

The goal is not to sound like Gbemi.

The goal is to become a parent who can stay **clear, calm, and firm** when honesty gets difficult.

One More Thing

Don't expect your child to suddenly become perfectly honest.

You're building a habit.

And habits grow through repetition.

Every time your child tells the truth and you respond in a steady way, you give them another experience of honesty.

Every time you refuse to turn the conversation into an interrogation, you remove some fuel from the old cycle.

Every time you keep a fair consequence while acknowledging honesty, you teach something very important:

"I can make a mistake and still face my parents."

That is a skill your child will need far beyond childhood.

One day, the problem may not be a broken cup or a hidden phone.

It may be a bad decision at school.

A mistake with money.

A friendship problem.

A relationship problem.

Something much bigger.

You want your child to know:

“When something goes wrong, I can still come home and tell Mum and Dad”

That kind of trust is built through hundreds of small moments.

And we're about to work on those moments.

Because telling the truth once is good.

But what if we could make honesty something your child starts experiencing as a normal, valuable part of family life?

That's what we're tackling next.

In the next chapter, we'll build the **Truth Deposits™ System**: a simple way to notice and strengthen honest behaviour without bribing your child, rewarding every tiny thing, or turning honesty into a performance.

Chapter 6

Make Honesty Pay: The Truth Deposits™ System

So now you have three tools you can use when things get messy.

You know how to **GUIDE** when your child tells the truth.

You know how to **STATE** what you know instead of interrogating them.

And you know how to **STOP** when the story keeps changing.

Good.

But here's the next question.

How do we make honesty stronger before the next problem happens?

Because if the only time you talk about honesty is when somebody has done something wrong, honesty starts to feel like a punishment topic.

"Tell me the truth."

"Why are you lying?"

"Don't lie."

"Be honest."

That's a lot of pressure around one word.

So I want to turn the idea around.

Instead of only noticing honesty when your child gets caught, start noticing it when your child **chooses it**.

I call these moments **Truth Deposits™**.

And no, I'm not talking about giving your child \$500 every time they tell the truth.

Please don't start a bank account for honesty.

We're talking about something much more powerful.

We're talking about building a history of small moments where your child learns:

“Being honest gets noticed.”

What Is a Truth Deposit™?

A Truth Deposit™ is any small moment where your child chooses honesty and you deliberately notice it.

That's it.

Maybe your child says:

“Dad, I forgot to do my homework.”

That's a Truth Deposit.

Maybe they say:

“Mum, I took the last piece of chicken.”

That's a Truth Deposit.

Maybe they tell you:

“I broke the charger.”

That's a Truth Deposit.

Maybe they admit:

“I was the one who sent that message.”

That's a Truth Deposit.

These moments may look small.

But small things repeated often become patterns.

Think of your bank account.

One small deposit doesn't make you rich.

But if you keep depositing, something starts to build.

Trust works in a similar way.

Why We Miss the Deposits

Here's something I've noticed as a parent.

Bad behaviour is loud.

Good behaviour is often quiet.

If my child breaks something, I notice.

If they lie, I notice.

If they shout at their sibling, I notice.

But if they quietly tell me the truth about a mistake?

I may simply say:

“Okay.”

And move on.

That is a missed opportunity.

I'm not saying you should clap every time your child tells the truth.

That would get strange very quickly.

You don't need:

“Everybody stop! Your sister has just told the truth!”

No.

You simply need to **notice it**.

A small:

“Thank you for being honest with me.”

can be enough.

Don't Confuse Reinforcement With Bribery

This is important.

Let's say your child says:

“Dad, I took the biscuit.”

And you give them ₦1,000.

Then tomorrow they take another biscuit.

“Dad, I took it.”

“Here's ₦1,000.”

You may have created a business model.

Your child may soon be thinking:

“How many biscuits can I take before this becomes profitable?”

That's not what we're doing.

A Truth Deposit™ is not a payment.

It's attention.

It's recognition.

It's connection.

It's letting your child know:

“I noticed that you chose honesty.”

The Three Levels of Truth Deposits™

You can make this very simple.

Level 1: Notice

Say:

“Thank you for telling me.”

That's enough.

Level 2: Name It

Say:

“That was honest. I know it wasn't easy to admit.”

Now you're helping the child understand what they did well.

Level 3: Connect It to Character

Say:

“That's the kind of honesty I want you to keep practising.”

You are showing them that honesty is becoming part of who they are.

Don't overdo this.

You don't need to give a speech every time.

Sometimes Level 1 is perfect.

Catch Them Being Honest

You may have heard the phrase:

“Catch your child being good.”

There's a reason that idea works.

If your child only gets your full attention when something goes wrong, they can start learning that bad behaviour is the fastest way to get a big reaction.

So look for the quiet wins.

Your child admits they forgot something.

Notice it.

Your child tells you they made a mistake.

Notice it.

Your child corrects a lie without you forcing them.

Definitely notice it.

Your child tells you what happened even though they know they may face a consequence.

Notice it.

You don't need to make the consequence disappear.

Just don't let the honesty disappear either.

A Truth Deposit Can Happen After a Lie

This is one of my favourite parts of the system.

Suppose your child says:

"I didn't touch it."

Five minutes later:

"Okay, Mum. I did."

That's a Truth Deposit.

Yes, the child lied first.

That still needs to be addressed.

But the return to the truth matters.

You can say:

“I'm glad you corrected yourself and told me the truth. Next time, I want you to tell me sooner.”

Then deal with the original behaviour.

You're teaching:

Coming back to the truth is always possible.

That is an important lesson.

The Truth Deposit Journal

You don't need to do this forever.

For seven days, try something simple.

At the end of each day, write down one honest thing your child did.

It could be tiny.

For example:

Monday: Admitted they forgot their homework.

Tuesday: Told me they spilled water.

Wednesday: Said they used the tablet after bedtime.

Thursday: Corrected their own story.

Friday: Told me their sibling had broken something without adding extra lies.

Saturday: Admitted they had eaten the snack.

Sunday: Came to me first when something went wrong.

You may notice something interesting.

You start looking for honesty.

And when you start looking for it, you may discover more of it than you thought.

What If There Is Nothing to Write?

Don't force it.

And don't make your child perform honesty for you.

The purpose of the exercise is not:

“Find something good at all costs.”

It's to train **your attention**.

Maybe one day there is no obvious Truth Deposit.

That's okay.

Try again tomorrow.

The Family Honesty Language

Here's another useful idea.

Create a few simple phrases that become normal in your home.

For example:

“Tell me what happened.”

“You can always come back to the truth.”

“The truth doesn't remove responsibility.”

“Let's fix the problem.”

“Thank you for being honest.”

You don't need to announce these as family rules with a big poster.

Just use them.

Again and again.

Children learn through repetition.

What Happens When Honesty Becomes Normal?

Imagine two homes.

In the first home, honesty is discussed mainly when somebody has been caught.

The child hears:

“Don't lie.”

“Tell the truth.”

“Why are you lying?”

In the second home, honesty also gets noticed during ordinary moments.

The child hears:

“Thanks for telling me.”

“I know that wasn't easy to admit.”

“You made a mistake, but I'm glad you told me.”

Over time, those children may develop very different expectations.

The second child starts learning:

“My parent cares about what I did, but they also care that I tell the truth.”

That's the environment we're building.

The Parent's Part: Keep Your Word

There's one more piece.

If you tell your child:

“If you tell me the truth, I'll listen.”

Then listen.

If you say:

“Tell me what happened, and we'll work it out.”

Then work it out.

Don't promise something you don't mean.

Your child is watching whether your words match your actions.

Trust works both ways.

You want your child to become trustworthy.

They also need to experience **you as predictable**.

That doesn't mean you never get angry.

You're human.

You will have bad days.

I have bad days too.

The goal is not perfect parenting.

The goal is a clear pattern.

What About Serious Lies?

This is where we need some common sense.

Not every lie should be handled exactly the same way.

If your child lies about taking a biscuit, that's one thing.

If they lie about being bullied, being hurt, taking dangerous substances, sexual behaviour, self-harm, violence, serious theft, or another major safety issue, that is different.

In serious situations, don't get so focused on keeping the conversation “calm” that you ignore safety.

Your first job is to understand what happened and keep your child safe.

And if the situation is beyond what you can manage at home, get appropriate professional help.

The Truth-Safety Loop™ is a parenting framework for everyday patterns of dishonesty.

It is not a substitute for professional care when there are serious concerns.

Your 7-Day Truth Deposit Challenge

Let's make this practical.

For the next seven days:

Day 1

Notice one honest moment.

Say:

“Thank you for telling me.”

Day 2

Notice another.

Add:

“I know that wasn't easy to admit.”

Day 3

When your child corrects themselves, notice it.

“I'm glad you came back and told me the truth.”

Day 4

Ask yourself:

“Did I notice any honesty today that I normally would have ignored?”

Day 5

Use the phrase:

“You can always come back to the truth.”

Day 6

Write down three Truth Deposits you've noticed.

Day 7

Ask your child a simple question:

“Do you feel like you can tell me when you've made a mistake?”

Then listen.

Don't defend yourself.

Don't explain.

Just listen.

Their answers may teach you something important.

Don't Expect a Straight Line

Some days will feel great.

Your child may suddenly tell you everything.

Then two days later, they'll lie about something ridiculous.

Don't panic.

Progress is not always a straight line.

Think of it like teaching a child to ride a bicycle.

They wobble.

They fall.

They try again.

You don't say:

"Well, that's it. You obviously can't ride."

You help them practise.

Honesty is a skill too.

And skills need repetition.

The Bigger Goal

At this point, you might think the goal is:

"I want my child to stop lying."

That's a good goal.

But I want you to go one step deeper.

The bigger goal is:

"I want my child to know what to do when they've made a mistake."

That's different.

Because life will keep giving your child opportunities to make mistakes.

They will forget things.

They will break things.

They will make poor choices.

They will disappoint people.

They will sometimes mess up badly.

You cannot remove every mistake from their life.

But you can help them learn:

Admit it.

Face it.

Repair it.

Learn from it.

Move forward.

That's a much bigger lesson than simply saying:

"Don't lie."

One Last Truth Deposit

There's something I want you to do for yourself.

Think about your own childhood.

Did you always feel safe telling your parents the truth?

Maybe yes.

Maybe no.

Maybe it depended on the situation.

Maybe you remember one time you told the truth and were proud of yourself.

Maybe you remember one time you lied because you were terrified of what would happen.

You don't have to judge your parents.

And you don't have to copy everything they did.

You're allowed to take the good and improve the rest.

That's what parenting is.

We inherit patterns.

Then we decide which ones continue.

You can change the pattern without blaming the past.

The Seven-Day Reset Starts Here

By now, you have a complete foundation.

You understand the problem.

You understand the cycle.

You know how to respond when the truth comes out.

You know how to stop the interrogation.

And you know how to strengthen honesty when you see it.

Now it's time to put everything together.

Because information is nice.

A plan is better.

You shouldn't finish this guide thinking:

“That was interesting.”

You should finish thinking:

“Okay. Tonight, I know exactly what to do.”

That's where we're going next.

The final chapter is your **7-Day Truth Reset™**.

No complicated system.

No twenty-page parenting chart.

Just seven days, one step at a time, using everything we've built together.

And honestly, this is the part I wish every parent could keep on the kitchen counter — because when your child says, **“I didn't do it,”** you won't need to guess what comes next.

Chapter 7

Your 7-Day Truth Reset™: Start Here Tonight

So now you have the whole picture.

You know that repeated lying is not just about the words your child says.

You have seen the **Truth-Safety Loop™**:

ANTICIPATE → ESCAPE → DISCOVER → ESCALATE → RESET

You know the **Truth Before Trouble™ Rule**.

You know the three responses:

GUIDE. STATE. STOP.

And you know how to notice **Truth Deposits™** instead of only noticing mistakes.

Now we put it all together.

And I want to make one thing clear before we start.

You do not need to become a perfect parent for this to work.

You will lose your temper sometimes.

You will forget a step.

Your child will still lie sometimes.

That's normal.

The goal of these seven days is not to create a child who never lies again.

The goal is to create a **new pattern of response** in your home.

One day at a time.

Day 1: Find the Pattern

Today, don't try to fix everything.

Just watch.

I know.

That sounds too simple.

But if you want to change the Truth-Safety Loop™, you first need to know what your version of the loop looks like.

Pick one incident.

Maybe your child lies about homework.

Maybe screen time.

Maybe food.

Maybe money.

Maybe something they broke.

Then write down what happened.

Ask yourself:

What happened just before the lie?

What exactly did my child say?

What did I say?

How did my child respond?

How did the conversation end?

Don't write:

“My child was being stubborn.”

Write what actually happened.

For example:

“I asked if homework was done. He said yes. I checked and it wasn't. I raised my voice. He said the teacher didn't give homework. I called his mother and checked the school message. He then admitted he had not done it.”

Now you have something useful.

You have a pattern.

Your Day 1 Rule

Observe before you correct.

You're not ignoring bad behaviour.

You're learning how the behaviour unfolds.

Tonight, before bed, ask:

“What did I learn about my child's lying pattern today?”

Write one sentence.

That's enough.

Day 2: Run the Cost-of-Truth Audit™

Today we're looking at **your side of the loop**.

Don't panic.

This is not about blaming yourself.

It is about finding something you can control.

Think about the last time your child told you something you didn't want to hear.

What happened?

Answer these five questions:

1. What was my first reaction?

Did my face change?

Did I shout?

Did I become quiet?

Did I start asking questions?

2. What were my first words?

Write them down as closely as you can remember.

3. What consequences followed?

Was it fair?

Was it connected to the behaviour?

Was it predictable?

4. How long did the conversation last?

Five minutes?

Thirty minutes?

An hour?

5. Did I bring the mistake up again later?

This last one matters.

Sometimes a child makes a mistake on Monday and is still hearing about it on Friday.

That can teach a painful lesson:

“If I admit something, it never really goes away.”

Again, I'm not saying you should ignore serious behaviour.

I'm asking you to notice the pattern.

Day 3: Install Truth Before Trouble™

Today is the day you change one sentence.

From now on, when your child tells you the truth about something they've done wrong, start with:

“Thank you for telling me.”

Then:

“Now let's deal with what happened.”

That's it.

Don't overthink it.

If your child says:

“Mom, I broke the plate.”

Say:

“Thank you for telling me. Now let's clean this up.”

If they say:

“I used the phone when I wasn't supposed to.”

Say:

“Thank you for telling me. You still broke the rule, so let's deal with that.”

If they say:

“I didn't do my homework.”

Say:

“Thank you for being honest. Now let's work out when you're going to finish it.”

The message stays the same.

Honesty does not erase responsibility.

But honesty is still welcome.

Day 4: Use GUIDE, STATE, STOP

Today you're going to practise the three responses.

Don't wait until the biggest family crisis.

Use them when an ordinary situation comes up.

When your child tells the truth:

GUIDE

"Thank you for telling me. Tell me what happened."

Then:

"Okay. Let's work out what happens next."

When you know they're lying:

STATE

"I know what happened. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me the truth."

Then stop talking.

Give them room.

When the story keeps changing:

STOP

"We're going to pause here. When you're ready to tell me the full truth, we'll continue."

Then stop arguing.

You don't need to win.

You need to stay consistent.

Day 5: Break the Interrogation Habit

This might be the hardest day.

Because when we know our child is lying, we want answers.

Immediately.

All of them.

Every detail.

We ask:

“Did you do it?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Don't lie.”

“I'm not.”

“Then why did your teacher say this?”

“I don't know.”

“Who told you to do it?”

“I don't know.”

“Why are you looking away?”

“I don't know.”

And suddenly, you are conducting an investigation worthy of a police station.

Stop.

Today, practise asking **one clear question**.

Then give your child time to answer.

If you already know enough, say what you know.

Then invite the truth.

For example:

“I saw you take the money. Tell me what happened.”

Then wait.

If the child denies it:

“I'm not going to argue about what I saw. When you're ready to tell me the truth, we can talk.”

That's enough.

The Five-Second Pause

Here's a small trick.

When you feel yourself getting angry, pause for five seconds.

Breathe.

Don't answer immediately.

Your child doesn't need to see every emotion you feel.

You're allowed to be angry.

You're just choosing not to let anger drive the conversation.

Because sometimes the biggest change in a parenting conversation is not finding the perfect words.

It's removing the **extra words**.

Day 6: Start Your Truth Deposits™

Today you're going looking for honesty.

Not mistakes.

Not lies.

Honesty.

Look for one moment when your child tells the truth.

It could be tiny.

Maybe:

“Dad, I ate the last biscuit.”

Or:

“I forgot.”

Or:

“I was the one who did it.”

Or:

“I used your phone.”

When you notice it, say:

“Thank you for telling me.”

If it was difficult for them to admit:

“I know that wasn't easy to say.”

That's enough.

No money.

No sweets.

No big reward.

Just recognition.

Why This Matters

Imagine your child has been hearing:

“Don't lie.”

“Stop lying.”

“Why are you lying?”

“Tell the truth.”

Now they begin hearing something else:

“Thank you for telling me.”

“I appreciate your honesty.”

“You can always come back to the truth.”

Those repeated messages can help create a different family culture.

Not a perfect one.

A different one.

And that's what we're after.

Day 7: Build Your Family Truth Agreement

You've reached the final day.

Now sit down and think about the kind of home you want to build.

Not a perfect home.

A home where people can admit mistakes.

A home where rules still matter.

A home where people can repair what they break.

A home where honesty is expected but not treated like a weapon.

Write these four statements somewhere you can see them:

We tell the truth, even when it is uncomfortable.

Mistakes still have consequences.

Telling the truth helps us solve the problem.

You can always come back to the truth.

You can change the words to sound like your family.

The important thing is that everyone understands the idea.

Your 30-Day Maintenance Plan

The seven days are only the reset.

Now we keep the new pattern alive.

You don't need another complicated programme.

Keep doing three things.

1. Keep Truth Before Trouble™

When your child tells the truth:

Acknowledge it.

Then deal with the behaviour.

2. Keep Consequences Predictable

Your child should know that rules still matter.

If a rule is broken, there should be a reasonable response.

Don't make the consequence enormous just because you're angry.

And don't remove every consequence because your child confessed.

Fair and predictable beats angry and extreme.

3. Keep Making Truth Deposits™

Notice honesty.

Especially when it would have been easier for your child to hide.

Say:

“Thank you for telling me.”

Then move forward.

What Progress Actually Looks Like

Don't expect:

Monday: Child lies.

Tuesday: Child never lies again.

Real life doesn't work like that.

Progress may look like this:

Week 1

Your child still lies, but sometimes corrects the story.

Week 2

Your child starts admitting small mistakes sooner.

Week 3

Your child comes to you about something before you discover it.

Week 4

The arguments become shorter.

Those are meaningful changes.

Look for:

Earlier honesty.

Less hiding.

Fewer changing stories.

More voluntary admissions.

Shorter arguments.

More willingness to repair mistakes.

That's progress.

When You Have a Bad Day

You will.

Maybe your child lies and you explode.

Maybe you shout.

Maybe you say something you wish you hadn't.

Don't decide:

"I've ruined everything."

You haven't.

Repair it.

Later, when things are calm, you can say:

“I was very angry earlier, and I didn’t handle that well. The rule still matters, but I should have spoken to you more calmly.”

That teaches something powerful too.

It teaches your child that adults can admit mistakes.

You are not only teaching honesty with your instructions.

You're teaching it with your own behaviour.

When This Strategy Is Not Enough

I want to be very clear about this.

Repeated lying can sometimes be part of a bigger problem.

If your child's behaviour is severe, persistent, or happening alongside other serious concerns, don't assume a parenting guide can solve everything.

Pay attention if there are major changes in behaviour, serious aggression, stealing, dangerous behaviour, significant school problems, substance use, self-harm, abuse concerns, or other issues that make you worry about your child's safety or wellbeing.

In those situations, speak with an appropriately qualified professional who can understand your child's individual situation.

You don't have to handle everything alone.

And asking for help doesn't mean you failed as a parent.

Sometimes the strongest parenting move is knowing when you need another person on your team.

The Reset in One Page

If you forget everything else in this guide, come back here.

BEFORE THE LIE

Ask:

“What might my child be afraid will happen if they tell me?”

WHEN YOU DISCOVER THE LIE

Don't interrogate.

STATE what you know.

“I know what happened. Tell me the truth.”

WHEN THEY TELL THE TRUTH

GUIDE.

“Thank you for telling me. Now let's deal with what happened.”

WHEN THE STORY KEEPS CHANGING

STOP.

“We'll continue when you're ready to tell me the full truth.”

WHEN THEY VOLUNTARILY TELL THE TRUTH

Make a **Truth Deposit™**.

“Thank you for being honest.”

WHEN THEY DO SOMETHING WRONG

Keep the consequence reasonable.

Truth does not erase responsibility.

WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE

Repair it.

“I didn't handle that well. I'm sorry.”

That's the system.

Not complicated.

Not perfect.

Just consistent.

Your First Move Tonight

Don't wait until tomorrow.

Tonight, find one quiet moment with your child.

You don't need a big family meeting.

You don't need to announce:

“We are starting the Truth-Safety Loop™.”

Just talk.

You can say:

“I want you to know something. If you make a mistake, I still want you to tell me the truth. You may still have to deal with what happened, but you should never feel that you have to hide the truth from me.”

Then listen.

Don't give a speech.

Don't make promises you can't keep.

Just let the message sit there.

Because your child needs to hear something very simple:

“You can make a mistake and still come to me.”

That's the real goal.

Not a house where nobody ever lies.

A house where truth has a place to come home to.

And from here on, every time your child says, **“Dad, I need to tell you something,”** you have a chance to show them that truth is not the enemy.

It's where the repair begins.

BONUS SECTION

The Parent's Truth-Telling Cheat Sheet

Keep this section somewhere easy to reach.

When you're tired, angry, or standing in front of a child who has just said, **“I didn't do it,”** you don't need to remember the whole guide.

You just need to remember what to say next.

10 Ready-to-Use Phrases

1. When your child tells you the truth

“Thank you for telling me. Now let's deal with what happened.”

2. When you know they're lying

“I know what happened. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me the truth.”

3. When they keep denying it

“I'm not going to argue with you. When you're ready to tell me what really happened, we'll talk.”

4. When they finally confess after lying

“I'm glad you told me the truth now. Next time, I want you to tell me sooner.”

5. When they're afraid to tell you

"You can tell me what happened. I may not like it, but I need to know the truth."

6. When they make a mistake

"Making a mistake doesn't mean you have to hide it. Let's work out how to fix it."

7. When they blame someone else

"Tell me what the other person did, but also tell me what you chose to do."

8. When the story keeps changing

"The story keeps changing, so let's pause. We'll continue when you're ready to tell me the full truth."

9. When your child voluntarily admits something difficult

"I know that wasn't easy to admit. I appreciate your honesty."

10. When you want to remind them of the family rule

"The truth doesn't remove responsibility. It helps us deal with the problem."

What Not to Say When You Catch a Lie

Sometimes the best script is knowing which words to leave out.

Try not to say:

"You are such a liar."

Correct the behaviour.

Don't label the child.

Instead:

"What you just told me isn't true. Let's try again."

Avoid:

“I can't trust you anymore.”

One incident doesn't need to become a permanent identity.

Instead:

“Trust grows when we tell each other the truth.”

Avoid:

“If you loved me, you wouldn't lie.”

Love and honesty are important, but guilt is not a good way to teach either.

Instead:

“I want you to know you can tell me the truth, even when you've made a mistake.”

Avoid:

“Tell me right now or you'll regret it!”

That may produce a confession, but it can also make the child more afraid of future honesty.

Instead:

“Take a moment. When you're ready, tell me what happened.”

Avoid:

“I already know everything, so don't even bother talking.”

That closes the door you are trying to keep open.

Instead:

“I know some of what happened. I want to hear your side.”

Avoid:

“You always lie.”

Always?

Really?

The child may have told the truth many times that day.

Instead:

“You've lied about this, and we need to deal with it.”

Keep the correction about the behaviour.

The Truth-Safety Loop™ at a Glance

When a lie happens, remember:

1. ANTICIPATE

“What does my child think will happen if they tell me the truth?”

Something went wrong.

The child predicts the reaction.

↓

2. ESCAPE

“Maybe I can avoid the problem by denying it.”

The child lies or hides information.

↓

3. DISCOVER

“My parent knows something isn't right.”

You discover the lie.

↓

4. ESCALATE

“Now we’re fighting about the story.”

You push.

The child defends.

You push harder.

The child hides more.

↓

5. RESET

“We can deal with what happened without making honesty the enemy.”

You state what you know.

Invite the truth.

Acknowledge honesty.

Apply a fair consequence.

Repair.

Move forward.

The Truth Before Trouble™ Formula

When your child admits wrongdoing, remember:

**TRUTH → ACKNOWLEDGE → RESPONSIBILITY →
REPAIR**

TRUTH

The child tells you what happened.

ACKNOWLEDGE

“Thank you for telling me.”

RESPONSIBILITY

“What happened still wasn't okay.”

REPAIR

“What do we need to do to fix this?”

That's the formula.

Don't reverse it.

Don't begin with a lecture.

Don't make the confession itself the main offence.

Truth first. Trouble second.

The 3-Response Architecture™

When you're unsure what to say, identify which situation you're facing.

YOUR CHILD TELLS THE TRUTH

GUIDE

“Thank you for telling me. Tell me what happened.”

Then deal with the behaviour.

YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD IS LYING

STATE

“I know what happened. You don't need to make up another story. Tell me the truth.”

Then stop talking.

THE STORY KEEPS CHANGING

STOP

“We’re going to pause here. When you’re ready to tell me the full truth, we’ll continue.”

No shouting.

No courtroom.

No ten-minute argument.

The One-Minute Emergency Response Guide

Your child has just denied something you know they did.

You’re angry.

Here’s what to do.

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Take one breath.

Don’t respond from the first wave of anger.

STEP 2 — STATE

Say what you know.

“I saw you using the phone after I said no.”

STEP 3 — INVITE

“Tell me what happened.”

STEP 4 — WAIT

Give your child a moment.

Don't fill every second with questions.

STEP 5 — IF THEY CONFESS

Say:

“Thank you for telling me.”

Then address the behaviour.

STEP 6 — IF THEY KEEP LYING

Say:

“I'm not going to argue about this. When you're ready to tell me the truth, we'll continue.”

Then step away if appropriate and safe to do so.

STEP 7 — WHEN THE TRUTH COMES

Acknowledge it.

Apply a reasonable consequence if needed.

Repair the damage.

Move forward.

Screenshot This

If you remember only one thing from this entire guide, remember these four lines:

I want the truth.

You are still responsible for what you did.

Telling me the truth will not make the situation worse.

You can always come back to the truth.

That's the heart of the **Truth-Safety Loop™**.

You don't have to choose between being a strong parent and being a safe parent.

You can be both.

Firm about behaviour.

Open to truth.

Consistent with consequences.

Ready to repair.

And when tomorrow brings another:

"I didn't do it."

you'll know exactly where to begin.

About the Author

I'm Gbemi, a Nigerian Mum of two, and like many parents, I've learned that raising children comes with plenty of moments you never planned for.

The questions.

The arguments.

The "I didn't do it."

The stories that somehow change three times before you finally get to what really happened.

As parents, we want our children to be honest. But we also want them to know that when they make a mistake, they can still come to us.

That balance is not always easy.

This guide was created from that simple idea: **we can be firm about behaviour without making our children afraid of the truth.**

The **Truth-Safety Loop™** and **7-Day Truth Reset™** were created to give parents a simple way to understand the cycle around repeated lying and respond with more clarity.

I'm not here to tell you that your child will never lie again.

I'm here to help you handle those difficult moments differently.

Because one day, the problem may not be a broken cup or unfinished homework.

It may be something much bigger.

And when that day comes, I want our children to know one thing:

"I can still tell Mum or Dad the truth."

— Gbemi

Disclaimer

This guide is intended for **general parenting education and information only**. It is not medical, psychological, psychiatric, or professional clinical advice.

The **Truth-Safety Loop™**, **Truth Before Trouble™**, **3-Response Architecture™**, and **Truth Deposits™** are practical frameworks created for this guide to help parents think about and respond to recurring everyday lying. They are not presented as clinical diagnoses or guaranteed treatments.

Children lie for many different reasons. Age, development, personality, family circumstances, stress, fear, embarrassment, social pressure, and other factors can all play a role. The approach in this guide will not be appropriate for every child or every situation.

If your child's lying is severe, persistent, or happening alongside serious behavioural, emotional, developmental, or safety concerns, consider speaking with a qualified child-health, mental-health, education, or parenting professional who can assess your child's individual situation.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, seek appropriate emergency or safeguarding assistance in your area.

Most importantly, **this guide is not a substitute for knowing your child and using good judgment.**

Use what helps.

Adapt what needs adapting.

And when something feels bigger than what you can handle at home, **ask for help.**