



## Common Problems:

### Problem 1: Lying

#### *Eliminating Triggers for Lying*

One easy way to eliminate the things that trigger lies is to cut back on asking your teen a lot of questions.

Here is a quick exercise you can do to eliminate lies. For the next week or so, I want you to resolve not to ask you teenager any questions. This is a lot easier that it sounds. You just have to pay attention to the way you speak to your teen and reword any questions that you have to make them into statements.

For example:

**Instead of saying:** Did you clean up the mess you made in the kitchen?

**Say:** I would like to know that the kitchen is clean.

**Instead of saying:** Did you put my tools away?

**Say:** I want to have my things put away when they are no longer being used.

**Instead of saying:** Why do you play your music so loud late at night?

**Say:** I need to sleep at night. I expect the house to be quiet after 11:00.

## Lying Worksheet

### A Week without Questions

For one week you are going to stop asking your child questions. I would like you to keep a record of how well you are doing with this part of the program.

Every night before you go to bed, keep a record how you did avoiding asking your teenager questions.

# of times I asked My teen questions	<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

## **Problem 2: Stealing**

### ***Eliminating Triggers and Reinforcement for Stealing***

Parents often trigger stealing by leaving valuables around often to ‘test’ the thief to see if he will continue to steal.

Parents reinforce stealing by focusing negative attention on the person who stole and by asking questions, making accusations, and by scolding.

The more you are bothered by stealing, the more you want to be able to trust you kid. And the more likely you are to do things that encourage you teenager to steal.

### ***Reduce Temptation***

The first thing you should do is to try to eliminate the temptation to steal. That means you should observe what types of things are being taken and make an effort to make these things less accessible.

Treat your belongings as if you were in a strange place or as if you were having workers coming to your house. If you would lock them up, then you should do so now if you suspect a theft problem.

You should also let all of your children know that you have tightened up security around your belongings. Say something like,

“I have noticed that recently some of my belongings have been missing. As a result I am going to keep them elsewhere for now on.”

### ***Your Response***

What you want to try to do is to try to eliminate any negative attention.

Generally the way most parents react to their teenager stealing from them is by saying and doing those things that are most likely to encourage their children to keep on stealing; that is testing them, questioning them, accusing them, and scolding them. Just about any other reaction will produce better results than these four things.

What you choose to do specifically in response to a theft is not so important. What is important is that you choose to do something that keeps you relaxed and comfortable.

For example, one thing you could do is say to your children including the probable thief something like this:

“Dinner tonight is peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Please help yourself. I had \$75 taken from my purse today and I am really upset about it, so your Dad has decided to take me out to dinner to make me feel better.”

## **Stealing Worksheet- Object 1**

**Object Stolen** \_\_\_\_\_

**Original Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Frequency of Theft (times/day, week or month)** \_\_\_\_\_

**New more Secure Location (Date Moved)** \_\_\_\_\_

Here is an example of what you should say to inform your children of the tighter security in your home. Remember, this is to be made to all of the children, not just the suspected thief.

“I have noticed that recently some money has been missing from my purse. I usually leave my purse on the dresser when I am home. But for now on I am going to keep my purse somewhere elsewhere.”

**Your “Informing the Children” Statement:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Date Statement delivered:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Frequency of Theft in New Location (times/day, week or month)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Response:****When this thing was stolen did you:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Question your child</b>		
<b>Accuse your child</b>		
<b>Scold your child</b>		

Specifically, how did you respond when you found out something was stolen from you?

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How did your child react?

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## Stealing Worksheet- Object 2

Object Stolen \_\_\_\_\_

Original Location \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

New more Secure Location (Date Moved) \_\_\_\_\_

Here is an example of what you should say to inform your children of the tighter security in your home. Remember, this is to be made to all of the children, not just the suspected thief.

“I have noticed that recently some money has been missing from my purse. I usually leave my purse on the dresser when I am home. But for now on I am going to keep my purse somewhere elsewhere.”

Your “Informing the Children” Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date Statement delivered: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft in New Location (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Response:****When this thing was stolen did you:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Question your child</b>		
<b>Accuse your child</b>		
<b>Scold your child</b>		

Specifically, how did you respond when you found out something was stolen from you?

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How did your child react?

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## Stealing Worksheet- Object 3

Object Stolen \_\_\_\_\_

Original Location \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

New more Secure Location (Date Moved) \_\_\_\_\_

Here is an example of what you should say to inform your children of the tighter security in your home. Remember, this is to be made to all of the children, not just the suspected thief.

“I have noticed that recently some money has been missing from my purse. I usually leave my purse on the dresser when I am home. But for now on I am going to keep my purse somewhere elsewhere.”

Your “Informing the Children” Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date Statement delivered: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft in New Location (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Response:****When this thing was stolen did you:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Question your child</b>		
<b>Accuse your child</b>		
<b>Scold your child</b>		

Specifically, how did you respond when you found out something was stolen from you?

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How did your child react?

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## Stealing Worksheet- Object 4

Object Stolen \_\_\_\_\_

Original Location \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

New more Secure Location (Date Moved) \_\_\_\_\_

Here is an example of what you should say to inform your children of the tighter security in your home. Remember, this is to be made to all of the children, not just the suspected thief.

“I have noticed that recently some money has been missing from my purse. I usually leave my purse on the dresser when I am home. But for now on I am going to keep my purse somewhere elsewhere.”

Your “Informing the Children” Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date Statement delivered: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft in New Location (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Response:****When this thing was stolen did you:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Question your child</b>		
<b>Accuse your child</b>		
<b>Scold your child</b>		

Specifically, how did you respond when you found out something was stolen from you?

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How did your child react?

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## Stealing Worksheet- Object 5

Object Stolen \_\_\_\_\_

Original Location \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

New more Secure Location (Date Moved) \_\_\_\_\_

Here is an example of what you should say to inform your children of the tighter security in your home. Remember, this is to be made to all of the children, not just the suspected thief.

“I have noticed that recently some money has been missing from my purse. I usually leave my purse on the dresser when I am home. But for now on I am going to keep my purse somewhere elsewhere.”

Your “Informing the Children” Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date Statement delivered: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Theft in New Location (times/day, week or month) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Response:****When this thing was stolen did you:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Question your child</b>		
<b>Accuse your child</b>		
<b>Scold your child</b>		

Specifically, how did you respond when you found out something was stolen from you?

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How did your child react?

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## Problem 3: Swearing and Name Calling

### ***Avoiding Triggers***

If name calling and swearing is a problem for you, then you need to make sure that you are not triggering the behavior.

Ask yourself, if you wanted to get your child upset enough to swear at you how would you go about doing it? How you answer this question may describe exactly what you are doing to trigger your child to swear at you or to curse you.

Here is an exercise for you.

#### **Part 1:**

If you wanted to provoke your child into swearing or calling you a name, how would you go about doing it? Please make a list of the things you would say or do.

#### **What I Can do to Provoke My Teenager**

- 1- \_\_\_\_\_
- 2- \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_
- 4- \_\_\_\_\_
- 5- \_\_\_\_\_
- 6- \_\_\_\_\_
- 7- \_\_\_\_\_
- 8- \_\_\_\_\_
- 9- \_\_\_\_\_
- 10- \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2:**

The next five times your child curses at you or calls you a name, summarize what you said just before the incident.

**Incident 1**

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**Incident 2**

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**Incident 3**

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**Incident 4**

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**Incident 5**

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Now look at what you have recorded.

- Did you just give an order?
- Did you call him or her a name?
- Did you swear first?
- Did you make an accusation?
- Did you say or do any of the things you listed that you can do to provoke your teenager?

Try to identify the types of things that can trigger swearing and name calling from your child.

Once you have an idea what is triggering your teenager to use bad language, all you need to do to stop it is to stop saying or doing what is provoking your child.

## Problem 4: The Threatening Teenager

What do you do if your child is walking around in a threatening way? You might actually be afraid. Here is how you should handle this problem.

You should plan for how you would react if the worst thing that could happen were to occur.

First, use your imagination to envision the worst things that your teenager could do. Be as creative as possible. Don't leave any fears out.

### What are the Worst Things that Your Teenager Might do to You? (Be honest about this. You need to write down your worst fears)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**Now for each thing on your list plan in detail exactly how you are going to respond if it happens.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

That is all there is to it. You now have a detailed plan of exactly what you will do if your worst fears come true.

You can now put these fears behind you. You know exactly how to handle any situation that may come up. This alone will reduce your anxiety level and make your fears much less likely to occur.

As long as your teen's aggression is limited to belligerent gestures, you can ignore what is happening. And if your child does actually turn violent, you have a plan how to respond. You no longer have to live in fear of what might happen. You have a plan.

## Problem 5: Your Teenager Abuses Favors

How can you stop your teenager abusing the favors that you do for him? This is another very common problem that parents practically encourage their children to do.

How often do you do something for your teenager or grant him some favor, and then have him come back and misuse or show no appreciation for what you have done for him?

Here are some common examples of the ways teens do misuse the favors their parents do for them:

- Borrows your car and doesn't handle it carefully
- Borrows your money and doesn't repay you
- Uses your cosmetics and leaves a mess
- Leaves your things outside to be lost, stolen, or ruined
- Asks you to pick him up someplace at a certain time and then is not there
- Gets parking tickets and expects you to pay the fines
- Orders you to drive him places and doesn't ask politely

If you are a parent who has a teenager who does some of these things you are probably feeling frustrated, ill treated, angry, or helpless. But the truth is than any casual observer can see that you are practically asking for this treatment.

So how do you correct this problem?

You simply say "no".

Although the solution sounds quite easy, if you are parent who is locked into this pattern of behavior with your teenager, you may have trouble saying "no". But the key to handling the problem of your child abusing your favors is to stop giving him those favors.

### The Favors You Do

Make a list of the favors you do for your teenager. Now realize this is going to be a very long list. You probably don't realize how much you do for your child. You should write down as many things as you can, but it is most important to include those things that you do that you resent doing.

Here are a few examples that parents tend to resent:

- Lending money
- Lending the car
- Driving your teenager around
- Waking up your teen in the morning

You do not owe any of these things to your child. If you grant these requests you are doing your child a favor. Because they are favors you have the right to choose to say 'yes' or 'no'.

**The Favors I Do for My Teenager**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_\_

19. \_\_\_\_\_

20. \_\_\_\_\_

Next pick out the things that you **really resent** doing and list them here.

You are going to target these items.

### **My Target Favors**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

In order to be fair to your child, you need to warn your teenager about this change before you actually begin refusing.

You should say something like this:

“Brian, in the past I have done some favors for you when I really didn’t want to do them. I feel uncomfortable about that, so for now on I will do favors for you, but only when I feel good about doing them.”

Now, prepare the statement that you are going to say to your teenager.

**My “Enough is Enough” Statement:**      **Date Delivered** \_\_\_\_\_

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You can now go about your life, waiting for the next time your child asks for a favor. When that happens, do not respond yes automatically. Think to yourself whether or not you really want to grant that favor.

If the answer is no, then say “no”. Then you can add an honest short statement about why you don’t want to grant this request. Be sure to make this statement in the first person. Don’t use it to rebuke or get back at your child.

“No, Jeff, you can’t borrow the car. I feel uncomfortable with the way you have been taking care of it.”

## Eliminating other Problems with Your Teenager

I have shown you how to handle some of the common problems parents have with their teens.

Now I would like to address the other things that are in your column.

Knowing what we have discussed, I am going to ask you to figure out how you have been triggering or reinforcing these behaviors.

Have you elicited these behaviors through:

- Accusations
- Asking questions
- Complaining
- Criticizing and making negative remarks
- Giving orders
- Not treating your teen with respect
- Doing the same kind of behavior to your teen that you find so unpleasant
- Setting up the situation so that the behavior is more likely to occur

Have you been reinforcing the behavior by fueling it with negative attention?

Have you been:

- Scolding
- Lecturing
- Angry
- Punishing
- Feeling and expressing guilt

It is very important that you go over each item in your parent column and honestly judge how much of the unwanted behavior you have been encouraging. You should make a plan to eliminate all the triggers and reinforcement of these behaviors. If you do this you will find that most of the bad behavior you are experiencing is going to go away.

### Items Still in my Column

1- \_\_\_\_\_

2- \_\_\_\_\_

3- \_\_\_\_\_



4- \_\_\_\_\_

5- \_\_\_\_\_

6- \_\_\_\_\_

7- \_\_\_\_\_

8- \_\_\_\_\_

9- \_\_\_\_\_

10- \_\_\_\_\_

**The Ways I may be Triggering these Behaviors:**

1- \_\_\_\_\_

2- \_\_\_\_\_

3- \_\_\_\_\_

4- \_\_\_\_\_

5- \_\_\_\_\_

6- \_\_\_\_\_

7- \_\_\_\_\_

8- \_\_\_\_\_

9- \_\_\_\_\_

10- \_\_\_\_\_

**The Ways I may be Reinforcing these Behaviors:**

1- \_\_\_\_\_

2- \_\_\_\_\_

3- \_\_\_\_\_

4- \_\_\_\_\_

5- \_\_\_\_\_

6- \_\_\_\_\_

7- \_\_\_\_\_

8- \_\_\_\_\_

9- \_\_\_\_\_

10- \_\_\_\_\_

After you have eliminated your part in encouraging these bad behaviors by triggering them and reinforcing them when they occur, your list of things that bother you in the parents column should be quite short.

There still may be a few items left in your column. If you have stopped triggering and reinforcing the bad behavior, the only other way you may be causing your teen's behavior is by tolerating it.

Therefore, our next step is to work on not putting up with bad behavior.