

CHARLIE'S LITTLE ANGELS

I PROMISE
TO TELL THE
WHOLE TRUTH...

We all want our children to be honest citizens, but it's not always wise to lead by example, says this mother of two



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Lies are bad. They make your nose grow. Oh no, hang on, they don't. They make your underpants erupt in a big, burning ball of flames. Oh, sorry – my mistake – they don't do that either.

Convincing your children never to lie without having a dire (untrue) consequence attached is really very difficult. Early in our five-year-old daughter's life, we teased her by saying that whenever she told a fib her nose started twitching, so we could tell if she wasn't telling the truth. It was a throwaway comment designed to amuse her, yet she and her little brother still put their hands over their noses whenever they claim that, yes, their teeth are brushed. Or, yes, the toys are put away. Or, no, they didn't eat mud. It's a fabulously endearing family inside joke, but we're well aware of the irony in perpetuating a lie about lying.

I'm of the opinion that since childhood is far too short and you spend 95 per cent of your life bogged down by the harsh realities of world affairs and global injustices, indulging in a spot of escapism – or make-believe – with your children while they're still naïve enough to suspend belief is actually rather special. In our house Magic Daddy makes an appearance every now and then, conjuring up chocolates from behind ears, or presents under pillows for good behaviour, and the squeals of delight far outweigh our consciences at not being entirely honest.

How many of us were told as children (and still find ourselves saying out loud as parents) that eating carrots makes you see in

the dark? Or eating your crusts will make your hair curly? Every single one of us must have put our baby teeth under the pillow, diligently and full of expectation, and I don't know about you, but I for one have joined in with (and now orchestrated) more than my fair share of fairy hunts at the bottom of the garden.

In fact, my parents had to sit me down at the age of 13 to tell me that the man dressed as Santa in the shopping mall was actually Bob Smith from down the road – and that they were telling me this for my own good, so I wouldn't get bullied at school. If it weren't for that particular heart-to-heart, I think I'd probably still be putting my stocking out on Christmas Eve, along with a carrot for the reindeer and a mince pie for Santa.

I remember being devastated that the world wasn't quite as fantastical as I had previously thought, but surely it is better to have believed and been disappointed, than never to have believed at all?

A child's sense of wonder definitely has an expiry date. So I'm not willing to spend the next couple of years dispelling the myths and fantasies that could make their brief childhood that little bit more magical. But I do think there's a bit of a compromise to be made. When they ask questions about the world and life, I'll endeavour to reply with an age-appropriate answer without bending the truth too much. Sadly, after making this declaration, I fell at the first hurdle.

As we're eagerly awaiting the arrival of Baby No3, questions have started to be asked about how the baby will make his (or her) arrival into the world. In a bid to right my wrongs of the past, I decided to tell the truth – albeit a very watered-down version of the truth.

My daughter looked absolutely horrified as I gently explained about birth, and she ran to her father, eyes wide, and blurted out, "Daddy, Daddy, tell me the truth – how do babies come out?"

He shrugged his shoulders, thought for a second and said, "From Mummy's tummy button of course!"

"Phew," she replied, "Mummy just told me a fib that was really

disgusting." I've realised that sometimes honesty isn't always the best policy. **A**

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