

Is Your 4-Year-Old A Liar? Here's The Bright Side

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NPR:

Most parents bewail the inevitable occurrence of lying in their kids, but the emergence of deception in childhood may actually signal the development of something pretty wonderful: an ability to understand other people's beliefs as distinct from one's own.

This ability is part of what psychologists call "theory of mind," and a new paper finds that improving children's theory of mind abilities can turn honest 3-year-olds into strategic liars. That might not sound like a positive outcome, but it tells us something important about how theory of mind affects social behavior.

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That's where new research by Xiao Pan Ding and colleagues comes in. In a new paper published in the journal *Psychological Science*, the researchers report a study in which 3-year-old children were randomly assigned to one of two groups: a theory-of-mind training condition or a control group. In the theory-of-mind training condition, children participated in six sessions involving different theory of mind tasks, including versions of the false belief task described above. In the control group, children also participated in six sessions of training on developmentally appropriate tasks, but they weren't related to theory of mind.

Read the whole story: [NPR](#)