

# Deceive to Achieve!

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When I lovingly rubbed my protruding pregnant stomach, thoughts meandering on the beautiful relationship I was going to have with my child-to-be, birds tweeted and blossoms bloomed in my rose-tinted vision of girlish giggles and hand-holding happiness. I knew exactly what kind of relationship I was going to have with my daughter. It was going to be open and honest, and one where I talked to her candidly about life and all its issues, and one where she felt able to come to me with all her questions and problems. She would learn from my wisdom and off we would trot into the sunset with bunnies hopping beside us. *Tra la la.*

And then I became a mother. A real one. Not the fantasy type we see in magazines and parenting books, in clean Boden clothes, frolicking energetically through eternally sunshiny days, with never a cross word between us. Instead, I became a real mother – with all the harsh realities and mind-boggling exhaustion that are entwined with the love and laughter. Our relationship is one where we laugh and cry (usually she's laughing and I'm crying), we yell and shout (sadly me more than her), and hug and kiss (the best best best bit about mothering). We do have an honest relationship, my two-year-old and I, but – and it's taken me a while to learn this – it's only honest as long as the truth suits me of course!

I never thought the best bit of parental

advice I received would come from my brother, but one day he cunningly told my little niece that the zoo was closed for repairs when she was hounding us relentlessly to go. I raised my eyebrow in admonishment (only being a mum to a baby at this stage, I was foolishly allowing myself that sanctimonious 'that's not how you're supposed to do it' air people-who-are-yet-to-do-it have).

'Deceive to achieve, Sis. Deceive to achieve. It's the only way,' he claimed triumphantly as my niece sauntered off to play with her doll, satisfied she was not missing out on the elephants. I was shocked of course. This was not how I was going to do it. Oh no no. I was going to be honest and open, remember?

Oh no indeed. It's astonishing how quickly one's sanctimonious know-how evaporates the nano-second your child reaches the Age of Un-Reason. And by the way, for those who don't know, the Age of Un-Reason follows the beautiful but short-lived Age of Compliance, around the age of one, and unfortunately seems destined never to be followed anytime soon by the Age of Reason. I'm sure my own mother will attest to that.

And so you have to make a decision. Honesty versus survival? Openness versus dictatorship. In fairness to most of us, we have all tried the former options in a vain hope that our angelic child will comply and conform to our every desire. Sadly, once you've woken up and faced the day, you realise that there is only one option available to you if you have





## parenting

any chance of retaining your sanity. It's called Deception. You can also call it cute cunning, or strategic superiority, or even masterful mummery, but when all is said and done, it's plain old-fashioned deceit. Deceive to achieve is the only way.

It started with a simple little white lie. So white in fact, it hardly really registered as an actual lie. Honestly. There weren't any Petit Filous on the shelf. Not the actual shelf she was pointing to anyway. The fact that there were at least five on the shelf above is not the point. She conceded happily, a tantrum was averted and I didn't have to be the Bad Cop. Again.

Now, I actually pride myself on the creativity of my deceptions. It amuses me in ways my husband finds rather disturbing. I'm so full of glee when I recite my catalogue of cunning capers when he returns from work, I'm sure he often thinks I've lost the plot.

My latest uber-scam (if I may be so modest) is the broccoli bombshell. After months of feeding my beloved child organic, home-cooked, multi-coloured, multi-nutritional, multi-tasty morsels, the wretched Age of Stubbornness took hold (this works in parallel with the Age of Un-Reason) and all things green became the deal-breaker on culinary negotiations. Here was the deal – she would not break.

As I pleaded with her one day that she could not have pesto pasta for every meal, the little devil of deception that lives in the dark recess of my brain whispered back to me 'Oh yes she can....'

My eyes fell upon the frozen bags of pureed vegetable cubes I'd just made for my baby. Aha!

Now Daisy can have pesto pasta as often as she likes – she just has it with two cubes of pureed broccoli, or green beans, or courgette – absorbed and hidden by the strong flavoured, green coloured pesto. Riding high on my success, I now chuck a cube of cauliflower in with her pasta cheese sauce.

I can't win them all. Nor should I. She has plenty of scope to get her way – you should see some of the outfits she goes out in! But those moments when I secretly win – the ones when she is happy with my answer, and I rub my hands with witch-like glee – Score One for Mummy! They're almost better than chocolate.

Yes, I know, I really should get out more.... \*