

## Checklist

Our top picks for the week

**Rent** “The Night of the Shooting Stars.” Set in a German-occupied Tuscan village in 1944, this 1982 Taviani brothers film is a one-of-a-kind war movie, unfolding like a folk tale passed on from generation to generation. Stirring, lyrical, savage, it’s a marvel of a movie.

**Read** “Before John Was a Jazz Giant.” This children’s book imagines a young John Coltrane absorbing the sounds of his environment—hambones in his grandmother’s pot, the whistle of a steam train—before he ever picked up a sax. Concise, rhythmic prose and gorgeous illustrations make this imposing legend accessible to a new generation.

**Log on to** [seafoodwatch.org](http://seafoodwatch.org) and download a pocket guide that lists the best seafood to buy to support environmentally friendly fisheries and fish farms. The guides are tailored to various U.S. regions and also recommend seafood to avoid.

**Hear** “She & Him: Volume One.” Actress Zoey Deschanel teams up with singer-songwriter M. Ward to create a sound as mellow as a lazy Sunday. Her sweet, haunting voice evokes an Old World charm, while his instrumentals perfectly accompany her on original songs and several covers. This album is sure to be the soundtrack of spring (\$13).

**Go to the Marburger Farm Antique Show, in Round Top, Texas. One of the country’s best venues for collectors, the event features more than 300 dealers from North America and Europe (April 1–5; [roundtop-marburger.com](http://roundtop-marburger.com)).**

## Liar, Liar, Parents on Fire

WHEN MY DAUGHTER ASKED ME WHY IT WAS EMBARRASSING THAT FORMER New York governor Eliot Spitzer was involved with a cowgirl ring, I didn’t hesitate. “Bad lariat tricks,” I explained. She looked a little confused, but let it drop. I know that I’m not supposed to lie to my kid, but I didn’t feel like explaining prostitution to a 7-year-old. But it is hardly the first whopper I’ve told my child, and it got me thinking about how I really feel about honesty as a policy. Over the years, I have concocted elaborate tales of how the

Easter Bunny finds us even when we’re on vacation in Florida. I have artfully dodged questions about where babies come from and proclaimed my child’s half-hearted scribbles works of genius. I have promised her that I would be home at 6:30, even though I knew in my heart I would never make it in time. I have implied that if I don’t do some work while we’re on vacation that we could someday end up homeless. I’m not proud, but I also know I’m not alone. “Don’t feel bad,” says Alan Hilfer, director of psychology at Maimonides Medical Center in New York. “We all tend to lie to our children on a regular basis.”

But there are lies, and then there are lies. Hilfer assures me that Santa and the tooth fairy are not (necessarily) the stuff of future therapy sessions. Instead, they fuel kids’ imaginations and make holidays more magical. Children long to believe in these stories, and parents like me are only too happy to accommodate them. Coaxing children to lie in order to spare someone’s feelings—“tell Grandma you love the pair of socks she knitted for you even though they’re really scratchy”—is also perfectly acceptable, according to the pros. In fact, the ability to understand these kinds of “pro-social” lies is a positive developmental milestone for children, according to Victoria Talwar, an assistant professor at Montreal’s McGill University and an expert on children and lying. It shows they have developed empathy and have begun to understand that there is a world beyond them.

The experts were less reassuring, however, about what I have come to think of as lies of convenience. You know, telling your child you cannot afford to buy a \$3 sack of polished stones at the science museum when the truth is that you just don’t want any more rocks at your house. Pretending to call Santa on your cell phone to alert him to bad behavior also apparently falls into the unacceptable category. Even though I think that what most parents lament about this par-

ticular white lie is that it can be employed effectively during only a few short months, it actually represents abdicating parental responsibility. “That’s asking Santa to do your job,” says Wendy Mogel, a child psychologist in Los Angeles. “That’s asking Santa to do your job. Santa’s job is to get down the chimney and eat the cookies. You have the courage to say ‘no’ to

**I have promised I would be home at 6:30, even though I knew in my heart I would never make it.**

your own child.” After absorbing that bombshell, I asked Mogel about the downside of false praise. She says that telling your child everything he or she

does is great ultimately does them a disservice. We do this because we want our kids to be secure and to like us, she says, but plenty of research shows that external reward reduces intrinsic motivation. Better to ask them about their process—why they chose blue for their artwork or decided to make Mommy’s head square.

Like most parenting advice, the truth about

lying is both slightly obvious and nearly impossible to follow. I’d like to think I’ve lied for the best of reasons—to make a holiday extra-special or because I really *meant* to leave work early and spend time with my child. But I’ve also lied because I was exhausted and wanted to avoid an argument. By 7 or 8, experts say, most kids understand the intentions behind a lie, which puts me right in the danger zone. So I’m going to try to stop lying to my daughter because I want her to trust me, and because I don’t want her to learn that lying is an effective strategy for dealing with the adult world. Even if that’s the sad truth.

**Go to the Marburger Farm Antique Show, in Round Top, Texas. One of the country’s best venues for collectors, the event features more than 300 dealers from North America and Europe (April 1–5; [roundtop-marburger.com](http://roundtop-marburger.com)).**