

## Lying to Parents

Noah is a twenty-one year old university student. He excels academically, plays on an intramural sports team, and has a part-time job on campus. His parents are very religious and believe that drinking alcohol is morally abhorrent. Noah, however, has recently started having a few beers at parties on weekends. Contrary to his parents, Noah doesn't see anything wrong with drinking alcohol. Although he never gets drunk or drives under the influence, his family would be infuriated if they found out he was consuming alcohol -- and they would practically disown him if he told them that he sees nothing wrong with it. When confronted by his parents about drinking, Noah is unsure how to respond.

In part, Noah thinks that he should tell his parents the truth about his drinking because he has a right to hold his own beliefs and shouldn't have to hide those beliefs—especially from his parents. Although Noah is very grateful to his parents for his upbringing, he doesn't believe that he must live his life exactly the way they want. In any case, he is only having a few beers at parties. If they love him for who he is, thinks Noah, they will accept him despite their differences.

On the other hand, Noah is certain that if he answers their question honestly, it would be very detrimental to his relationship with his parents, the two people that he loves the most in life. Even if his parents eventually come to terms with his drinking, Noah knows that things will never be the same once he tells them. They will feel betrayed and very hurt. They may even withdraw their financial support for him, which includes paying his tuition and living expenses at university. If Noah just lies, he sometimes thinks, he could avoid a potentially damaging situation.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Should Noah tell the truth to his parents or should he lie? Which choice is morally superior?
2. What moral obligations does an adult child have to her parents?
3. Is it morally permissible to tell a lie in order to achieve some greater good? If so, under what conditions?