

## WHY PEOPLE LIE

By Bill Cottringer

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We all have a strong affinity to understanding things, especially understanding other people's behavior that causes us concerns or problems. Lies are always destructive in the end, and when they happen in a personal relationship they are the termites that eat away at the fundamental trust foundation at the center of the relationship. Relationships are extremely important and valuable in life and no relationship can survive with lies. Understanding why people lie is critical to understanding the purpose of relationships and learning how to make them better for ourselves and others.

The purpose of a relationship is to give two people the experience of learning how to love and be loved and how to grow into their best signature selves. To love and be loved requires the most honesty of anything we can try to do in life. The honesty required to build a positive, healthy and productive relationship is the ultimate test of character—the process will bring out the absolute best and worst in you.

The honesty ingredient of loving and being loved requires two people to do two things they usually resist, at least in proceeding with the right order. The very first thing relationship honesty requires is the complete and unconditional acceptance of the person to locate at safe neutral place in space and time where two people have the freedom to go and communicate openly and honestly, without fear of rejection, judgment, control or other negative, defensive reactions.

This safe, neutral, magical venue is the only place where the peak communication that is necessary to build a loving relationship, can occur. It is either there or not in the beginning, mostly depending upon the two people's level of emotional and spiritual development going into the relationship from past life experiences. If it is not there, the challenge to the communication process can be overwhelming and a near impossible one to overcome, even with expert communicators. That takes a level of courage and patience that many of us don't possess, because there is *no* guarantee of safety or certainty that we paradoxically need to proceed.

The other thing that builds honesty can also build dishonesty if it isn't delivered correctly and in the right order. Unconditional acceptance, and the peak communication in which it is delivered, has to occur *first* to set the stage for the other ingredient that is necessary for giving and receiving love. We were all born to grow into our best self and through love, we can gently encourage and wisely help each other do that, once we have established complete acceptance and trust. Both intentions have to be fulfilled, but in the right order.

At this point this is all psychobabble theory. The practical application comes in understanding what goes wrong in relationships and working in some real solutions to correct what can be corrected or dismiss what must be dismissed. And the biggest thing that goes wrong in relationships is reversing the order of these two primary goals—to

accept the other person for exactly who he or she is now, foibles, flaws and all, and to encourage the growth that allows the person to fulfill the potential for greatness we all have. We are all meant to fly high, and nothing can substitute for that achievement.

This primary priority reversal is usually motivated by lies and that is why it is so important to understand why people lie so you can determine the best response—try to understand and grow past, or dismiss and move on. Why do people lie? Here are the reasons.

1. First of all, society has taught us to lie as one possible strategy to succeed. Shame on any of us for believing this lie. The only way a society-taught liar can stop lying is to finally realize the connection between the lying and the inevitable failure that lying brings. The ultimate reality is that lying will *never* have a happy ending. Obviously some people are slower learners than others. That is usually because some lying gets enough positive results, at least for awhile, to reinforce the habit and keep it going. To correct this mild form of lying, the person has to be given honest, helpful and loving feedback, moment by moment.
2. People generally lie to aggressively take something from you or to passively protect something of themselves that they don't want to give up or have discovered. The person who repeatedly tries to take something from you is one to avoid whenever possible. That kind of person comes close to an operational definition of evil and may just exist to demonstrate to the rest of us how *not* to be. Usually the passive protective approach is intended to hide our human flaws and weaknesses of being broken and found out. This is something we can all get caught up in, especially when love feelings open up vulnerability. It is just a reality that we must learn to communicate openly and honestly. Maybe it is one assumption worth making at the beginning of a relationship.
3. Our minds sometimes overanalyze things to the point of making lies out of distinctions between grades of something. Such is the case between morality, ethics and law. What is right is right and what is wrong is wrong and there really isn't any debate about that in one's conscience, when it isn't contaminated with erroneous thinking or misunderstood/illegitimate feelings. Unfortunately, the smarter a person is, the more artificial distinction he or she can make, until such "education" in the school of life comes full circle and the genuine simplicity just on the other side of complexity becomes visible. That can be a very long journey to correct a dumb mistake.
4. Lying can be a habit in which a person lies about lying to the point of not even realizing it. This often happens with exaggerating stories or other BS that really doesn't have a mean-spirited intention, but still isn't getting at the real honesty necessary for peak communication and loving relationships. This kind of lying is actually more destructive than it appears, because it is glimpse of more serious lying and can be a subtle but powerful inhibitor of relationship progress. It is an uncomfortable, bothersome feeling that can really get in the way. People who do this are always aware of it and just need to be gently reminded of the value of humility.

5. Most people will lie when they get backed into the corner because of strong feelings of pride, fear of being found out, and not wanting to be labeled a bad, inadequate or unintelligent person for giving the wrong answer to a question the asker already knows the right answer to. The best solution here is to not ask these sorts of questions unless you want to hear a lie. Of course the other person can take a chance and choose to tell the truth. But that is when expectations of both sides can get in the way. Tacit permission to tell the truth, with no fear of reprisal, may be the best solution here.
6. Sometimes lying is so much a part of the person's character, that it would require a major personality and character overhaul and miracle to cure. Most of us don't have the patience to wait around for that to happen, and probably shouldn't anyway. This is the kind of person we need to learn how to spot right away and avoid, from either subtle or obvious red flags. These people may need either lifetime therapy or religious/spiritual conversion or both.
7. A seemingly subtle but problematic way of lying is through a form of gossip in which a person "invents" information to be important and have something of value to add to such conversations, to look good. This type of lying is difficult to correct, because it is hard to catch with details in confrontations. It always ends up he said-she said accusations that can't be proved. Maybe when the other person explores more legitimate ways to be important, look good, be accepted and add real value to a conversation, the behavior will stop.
8. And then of course there is a real possibility that none of us really understand honesty fully and completely. We are still trying in our futile way to grasp it. There certainly is evidence that some truths are still evolving, as the further you travel, the bigger and more accurate the picture becomes. The most sacred covenant we can make in marriage is a prime example. How can we make such final promises and mean them with the absolute certainty we profess and demand, other than *right now* and then commit to the relationship inch by inch with clear focus on loving behavior and peak communication to nurture love's very real delicate, tentative, uncertain, surprising and evolving nature. Maybe honesty and love are the same thing?

The best solution to this lying problem in relationships is to learn how to be completely open and honest yourself, putting your own lying tendencies to bed, and then you will be better at spotting the level of lying that might be going on with the other person to determine if it is fixable or not, with open, honest and loving communication. The assumption worth making is that we are all capable of lying, given the right conditions. After all, people do what they perceive they *have* to do to either survive or thrive. It is a behavior we have to strive to understand and overcome. Maybe that is the real purpose of relationships.

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William Cottringer, Ph.D. is President of Puget Sound Security in Bellevue, WA. He is author of *You Can Have Your Cheese & Eat It Too*, *The Bow-Wow Secrets* and *Threading Your Needle With Life's Rope*. He can be reached at (425) 454-5011 or [bcottringer@pssp.net](mailto:bcottringer@pssp.net)