

BUT IT WAS ONLY A LITTLE WHITE LIE!!!

Simply defined, a lie is nontruth meant to deceive or mislead. However, lying is anything but simple! It is a complex behavioral/psychological/ethical phenomenon that ranges from small, harmless, victimless fibs to raging, vicious destructive falsehoods. It is ironic how we place a high value on honesty and yet according to research most people lie several times a day!

WHY DO PEOPLE LIE?

To make others feel good: “White lies” are victimless and are meant to spare feelings or build someone’s ego.

To get out of trouble: Lies that are motivated by need to avoid criticism or punishment. Kids are notorious for telling these kinds of lies.

To impress others: These are fabrications to get attention and to appear more interesting and important. Going to these extremes suggests low confidence and poor self-esteem.

To hurt someone: Deliberate hurtful lies motivated by revenge or to gain status or possessions are considered the worst and most malicious of lies. False rumors fall into this category

To feel better about ourselves: Self-deception, which is unconscious, helps people tolerate things in themselves, in others and situations in life that are difficult to accept.

Unmotivated lies: Some people lie for no apparent reason. They have nothing to gain and have no desire to hurt. The lies are compulsive like an addiction.

Some liars are sociopathic. They have no regret about lying and do not care who may get hurt. As long as they get what they want. However, most people feel badly about lying. It goes against what they were taught and is contradictory to how they want to see themselves and be seen.

At the heart of meaningful relationships lies trust. Even little white lies can erode that trust. Discovering that your good friend, romantic partner or business associate told a harmless fib may raise suspicions in future

interactions. On the other hand, can relationships withstand brutal honesty at all times? How can telling your spouse she is fat, that you hate her mother or that her lasagna was awful benefit the relationship?

In addition to creating social complications lying has detrimental effects on health. It takes energy to make up a lie, tell it convincingly, make sure it lines up with other facts, remember details accurately, protect it with other lies and worry about being found out. That is a lot of effort and stress. And we know that stress releases the bad hormone cortisol and wreaks havoc emotionally and physically.

Life, relationships and circumstances are complicated. There are times when you will have to make decisions that require a choice between honesty and deception. Take time to think about your choice and take into consideration long-term effects on yourself and on others. Remember that honesty, for the most part, though sometimes difficult, is liberating. Honestly!