

# Why we must tell lies



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Why We Must Tell Lies While somewhere on a greater moral plane we are taught that lying is "wrong," the fact is that Western Civilization as James Beniger asserts could be reduced to chaos without lies. Humans develop their ability to lie at a very early age. The average two-year-old is a liar, perhaps not a proficient and accomplished liar yet, but a liar nonetheless. By the time a child is a toddler, the innocence of youth is a myth, and the child has learned that lying is a necessary skill for survival in the world. The children who perfect the art of lying just might grow up to become successful politicians. As Henry Mencken points out, "Lying is not only excusable; it is not only innocent; it is, above all necessary and unavoidable."

Caught in a forbidden act, a two-year-old will quickly try to don a look of absolute innocence all while denying the alleged wrongdoing. Lying in children this young makes one wonder if lying is part of the human genetic code. The fact is, children probably are taught to lie by their first teachers—their parents. Brian Martin claims that parents carefully teach children how to lie and just as often lie to them (29). In teaching their children to lie, parents are preparing them to deal with the world. Once children set off for school, they must know how to lie effectively to teachers and classmates. Children who do not become good liars will not develop good interpersonal skills, and they will probably not become highly effective people. Every child needs to know how to explain the missing homework assignment and how to get along with playmates. Well-told lies are the most expedient means to these ends.

In the adult world, the most successful people are those who are proficient liars. Businesses would cease to function if proprietors always told the truth. No matter how difficult the customer, the good business person knows it is

necessary to say, " It has been a pleasure to serve you," and not, " Get out of my store you jerk." Businesses depend on return customers, and that means repeated lies and clever untruths so that the customer can " always be right."

Without lies, there would be no politicians and no governments; the world would descend into anarchy. A good politician knows that people do not really want to hear the truth, especially if the truth is unpleasant; therefore, the best politicians always have ready lies that are always delivered with a caring and earnest expression. These are good lies because they reassure the people that all is well, and that is after all, what people want to hear. Lies are the foundation of democracy, and lies set people free.

Be it a genetic trait or one acquired through social interactions, lying is a part of the fabric of civilization and socialization. And this stands for each and every society down the ages of human history not just Western Civilization. Great societies are founded on lies, and the most successful people are the most adept liars. Relationships, businesses, and governments depend on lies. In wider sense it could well be formulated that lying is a positive sign and approach of intelligence at the same time.

#### Works Cited

Beniger, James. Letter. New York Times. 18 May 1999.

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