

# To thine own self be true essay sample

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



The quote is from Act I, Scene III of Hamlet. The character of Polonius is speaking to his son, Laertes, who is about to go on a long trip. Shakespeare wrote the character of Polonius as a blow-hard, a meddler, an eavesdropper, who gets his due when Hamlet (thinking it is his murderous uncle hiding behind the arras) kills him as a “ rat.”

His lines were intended by The Bard to be taken as trite, if not pure tripe, and not for the masses to soak up! All are platitudes, offered up for his son to absorb, including “...to thine own self be true.” Read the play (better yet, go see it performed) and you will see how in other scenes Polonius is full of himself, and worthy of skewering, figuratively and literally. “ To Thine Own Self Be True”

“ Honey, how do you like my new dress?” The dreaded question that every husband hates to hear. Having learned that an honest answer to such a question will throw the household into turmoil , he tells a little white lie, he looks at his wife and says automatically, “ it looks great honey”. It doesn't matter if the color of the dress makes her look like she has jaundice or like she's a Paris Hilton wannabee. How many times a day are our abilities to tell the truth put to the test? Daily, we make decisions to questions like, “ How are you?” We respond with the obligatory “ fine” or “ great” or with a truthful five minute description of all our aches and pains, both mental and physical.

Constantly society dictates, “ Good people don't tell lies”, but day in and day out we have to make the decision whether we will express our true feelings, the truth, and accept the fallout from others, or say a lie to protect ourselves or our peers. We have to ask ourselves, what is a lie? How often do people

lie? At what point does lying become addicting and behavioral? When it comes right down to it, Shakespeare probably had it right when he said, “to thine own self be true.” If truth is what we seek, then we should try to avoid lies. It’s helpful to take these questions out and examine them so that the truth that Shakespeare referred to is something we’ve thought about and made those “self” decisions about.

What is a lie? According to Wikipedia, “A lie is a type of deception in the form of an untruthful statement, especially with the intention to deceive others, often with the further intention to maintain a secret or reputation, protect someone’s feelings or to avoid a punishment.” Sherry F. Colb, a professor at Rutgers Law School defines three main types of lies: Insignificant, Beneficial, and Harmful. Insignificant lies are known as the little white lie. Usually these lies are part and parcel of every day life. The husband telling his wife that she looked great, is an insignificant lie. Beneficial lies are larger lies than the insignificant lies with positive results. For example, John’s friend Mark is drunk and is trying to find his keys to drive home. John tells him that he lost his keys, so Mark can’t drive home. A beneficial lie helped John to maybe save someone’s life. The last and the biggest lie known is the harmful lie, the one told with malice aforethought, a lie meant to hurt, create problems or unjustly enrich someone physically, socially or in any other form.

It comes down to the point where we have to ask ourselves, how far are people willing to go to deceive others, to protect another’s feelings, or to embellish a situation? Dr. Bella DePaulo, a professor at the University of

Virginia, conducted an experiment, testing how often the average human being lies and why they do it. To find out the results of her experiment, she asked 77 college students and 70 community members to keep a journal keeping track of every lie that they told and why they told it. The study found:

The students lied an average of twice a day, and the community members lied half as often.

Lying was more common in phone calls than in face-to-face chat.

A tenth of the lies were merely exaggerations, while 60 percent were outright deceptions.

More than 70 percent would tell their lies again.

Lies are told every day around the world. While most people tell lies sporadically and when they need to, there are many liars among us who have become addicted or lie out of habit to protect themselves. These people have been psychologically diagnosed as compulsive liars and pathological liars.

A compulsive liar is defined as someone who lies out of habit. When asked questions, they are more comfortable with lying than the truth. Lying becomes an addiction, a reflex, that the person relies on to get their high feeling; their feeling of accomplishment. They are usually insecure, they have the inability to trust others, and they try to make themselves appear more interesting. One nationally recognized compulsive liar was the case of

Mark Hacking. In 2004, Lori Hacking, Mark's wife, was about five weeks pregnant, and they were planning on moving to South Carolina for Mark to attend medical school.

On July 19, Lori didn't return home from a morning jog. For weeks, the police searched for her body with no success, until they found her blood in Mark and Lori's apartment. The police were puzzled by the fact that Mark played the grieving husband perfectly, but they arrested him as a suspect. It wasn't until October that they found Lori's body in the landfill, that Mark was charged with Lori and her unborn child. Mark had the perfect symptoms of a compulsive liar. He lied about graduating with honors from Utah University, getting into medical school, and saying different things to confuse the police investigation.

The more severe of the psychologically diagnosed disorder is the pathological liar. They are defined by creating a "reality" around them. They believe everything that they say is true, and become very defensive if questioned about the veracity of their story. According to Raymond Lloyd Richmond, Ph. D. "Psychological Honesty": Even a pathological liar carries deep in his heart a desire for goodness and honesty and yet, because of painful emotional wounds, believes that the world never has, and never will, recognize his pain. And so, to hide that pain from himself, he uses all the lies he can concoct to hurl at the world as he runs in fear from his own goodness.

Most of us don't have to struggle with clinical disorders. Our ethical questions are more simple. We are in control of our own decisions to tell the truth or to begin the path of dishonesty. Our answers to these questions tells

the world and ourselves who we are and what values we hold. The Global Warming strength and confidence we have as truth tellers is ample reward to adopt the old saying, "Honesty is the best policy." Or is it?