

It is often difficult to know if a subject is being truthful. “Deception, a deliberate attempt to convince someone of something the liar believes is untrue, is a fact of everyday life. Depaulo and her colleagues asked participants to keep a diary for a week of all their social interactions lasting more than 10 minutes and to note how often they lied during these interactions. Almost all participants admitted that they had lied during the week they kept the diary. They lied in one out of every four social interactions and to more than 30 percent of all the people they interacted with.”¹ Lot of things don’t work:

- In ancient China, suspects would be made to chew dry rice while being questioned. When the suspects spat out the rice, they were assumed to be guilty if the grains remained stuck to their tongue. The reasoning was that the stress created by lying would slow saliva flow and cause a dry mouth. It was believed that an innocent person would have no reason to stress under such conditions.
- Trials by ordeal were a common means of detecting guilt from innocence, although they’re widely considered now to be barbaric and violent tests revealing nothing of truth or lies. These were ancient judicial practices in which the accused was subjected to dangerous perils. Death would indicate guilt, and survival suggested innocence.
- The Bocca della Verità (the Mouth of Truth) is a heavy marble disc carved into the shape of a head and face. It is said to originally represent the Titan god Oceanus, of the great earth-encircling river that feeds all the world’s rivers, wells, and springs. Beginning in the middle ages, the disc was supposed to tell truth from lies.

Terminology

- **Credibility Assessment:** A credibility assessment determines how believable an individual’s prior statements and testimony are. Credibility assessments are used more in legal settings to determine quality of a witness in a proceeding.
- **Deception Detection:** Deception detection makes use of questioning and observation techniques, along with technology that records physiological functions, to assess the likelihood of truth and falsehood in a subject’s story. “In the end, detecting deception is all about honesty.” Ekman concludes, “It’s much harder to find the truth than to find a lie. A good lie-catcher is good at identifying truthfulness.”²
- **Impression Management:** “In sociology and social psychology, impression management is a goal-directed conscious or unconscious process in which people attempt to influence the perceptions of others about a person, object, or event. Impression management is performed by controlling or shaping information in social interactions.”³
- **Faking Good:** Faking good is when a subject attempts to distort their true motives by convincing the evaluator that they are better, or respond to questions in a more socially desirable manner. They may do this to convince the evaluator that they are healthy, well adjusted, and have few problems. They may attempt to hide mental health problems, anti-social beliefs, or problems they have with authority or following the rules.

- **Faking Bad:** Faking bad refers to when a subject attempts to make the evaluator think that the problems they are having are worse than they really are. They may do this in order to receive some kind of accommodation, such as increased time on an exam they are taking, or they may want to convince the evaluator that the reason they made a threat or hurt another person was due to a serious mental disorder, rather than simple anger or recklessness.
- **Halo Effect:** The halo effect is a bias in which our overall impression of a person (a figurative halo) colors our judgment of that person's character. The research into the halo effect shows that a person's positive qualities, physical appearance, and general attractiveness affects how we judge their character — the better they look and behave, the better a person we judge them to be. Thorndike (1920) conducted an experiment in which soldiers were rated by their commanding officers in terms of their physical qualities (e.g., neatness, energy, and physique) and their mental, emotional, and social qualities (e.g., intellect, leadership, and responsibility). Thorndike found that if one of the soldier's qualities was rated highly, the other qualities tended to also be rated highly, and vice versa. Example: Concluding that a politician who is warm, friendly, and has a great smile would make good decisions.⁴
- **Cognitive Overload:** Cognitive load refers to the total amount of mental effort being used in the working memory. In the late 1980s, Sweller developed this concept in reference to learning environments. Studies confirm that being deceptive is more cognitively demanding than being truthful.⁵ As a result, there is a cognitive overload.
- **Microexpressions:** Microexpressions are very brief facial expressions, lasting only a fraction of a second. They occur when a person either deliberately or unconsciously conceals a feeling. Ekman's research has revealed that seven emotions have universal signals: anger, fear, sadness, disgust, contempt, surprise, and happiness.⁶

Why do we lie? To protect:

- **Ourselves.** Lying often is a way for people to avoid suffering painful consequences, shame, embarrassment, or conflict.
- **Our interests.** We lie so that we may get material goods (e.g., money) and non-material goods (e.g. attention from the telling of tall tales).
- **Our image.** We all want others to think well of us, yet we all do things that we ourselves consider less than respectable at times.
- **Our resources.** We often lie to avoid expending energy or time doing something we really don't want to do.
- **Others.** Telling people what they want to hear is a way to protect their feelings.⁷

Friendship = Proximity + Frequency + Duration + Intensity

- **Proximity** is the distance between you and the another individual and your exposure to the individual over time (think non-threatening environment).
- **Frequency** is the number of contacts you have with another individual over time.
- **Duration** is the length of time you spend with another individual over time.
- **Intensity** is how strongly you are able to satisfy another person's psychological and/or physical needs through the use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors (think curiosity).⁸

Friend Signals

- **Eyeblink** is a quick up-and-down movement of the eyebrows that lasts about one-sixth of a second (brief and not staring).
- **Head tilt** to the left or the right is a nonthreatening gesture. This is a strong friend signal.
- **The smile** should be genuine with upturned corners of the mouth and upward movement of the cheeks accompanied by a wrinkling around the eyes. Insincere smiles tend to be lopsided.
- **Head nodding** communicates to those speaking that they should keep talking.
- **Isopraxism** is mirroring a person's body language.
- **Inward lean** is when people lean toward those they like and away from those they don't.
- **Verbal nudges** reinforce head nodding and encourages the speaker to continue talking (e.g., "I see," "go on...," "tell me more," etc.).
- **Focused listening** requires those conducting interviews to not let distractions interrupt their attentive listening.

Foe Signals

- **Elongated stare** or eye contact that lasts more than a second can be read as aggressive.
- **Body scan/elevator eyes** is a head-to-toe gaze and is often seen as intrusive because the person doing the looking hasn't earned the right to invade the other's personal space.
- **Eye roll** sends the message that you think the individual is stupid and not worth listening to.
- **Eye squinting, furrowed eyebrows, and facial tension** are associated with disapproval, uncertainty, and anger.
- **Conversational bridge back** is used to build rapport and convey a sense that you are attending to the person being interviewed. There is a reference to a prior knowledge set or conversation that establishes past connections and moves the rapport forward.
- **Asking a favor** is used to build rapport and builds on the concept that doing favors for others builds trust and helps the individuals feel good about themselves. (Watch drink example.)

Endnotes

- 1 Scalora, M., Simons, A., & Vansly, S. (2010, February). Campus safety: Assessing and managing threats (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin). Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- 2 Granhag, P. Vrij, A. & Verschuere, B. (2015). Detecting Deception: Current Challenges and Cognitive Approaches. Wiley Press, Malden, MA.
- 3 www.amazon.com/Telling-Lies-Marketplace-Politics-Marriage/dp/0393337456
- 4 www.boundless.com/management/textbooks/boundless-management-textbook/organizational-behavior-5/individual-perceptions-and-behavior-41/impression-management-219-6809/
- 5 Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977b). The Halo Effect. Evidence for Unconscious Alteration of Judgments. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35, 250–256. www.beinghuman.org/article/halo-effect
- 6 Patterson, T. (2009). The Effect of Cognitive Load on Deception. FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 121. <http://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1174&context=etd>
- 7 Ekman, P. (1985). Telling lies. New York : W. W. Norton. www.paulekman.com/micro-expressions/
- 8 www.psychologytoday.com/blog/happiness-in-world/201003/why-we-lie