

HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE IS LYING

BY
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THE KNOWLEDGE DISCUSSED in this book can be useful for managers, employers, and for anyone to use in everyday situations where telling the difference between the truth and a lie can help prevent you from being a victim of fraud/scams and other deceptions.

What follows is a basic run-down of physical gestures and verbal cues used by police, forensic psychologists, security experts and other investigators that may indicate someone is being untruthful. Remember: these signs don't indicate someone is lying, just that they are *more likely* to be lying.

IF YOU WERE ACCUSED of murder, you'd be under enormous pressure to lie if you were guilty. The stakes are high, and that kind of pressure can lead to physical cues that will give you away.

ON THE OTHER HAND, a person serving a life sentence for murder would feel virtually no pressure when lying about the murder because he or she is already in prison. There wouldn't be any further consequences for lying. In this case, it's the verbal details, and not body language, that will likely be his or her undoing.

Using this knowledge of physical and verbal clues, you can separate the liars from the truth-tellers. Here is an easy set of guidelines to accomplish just that.

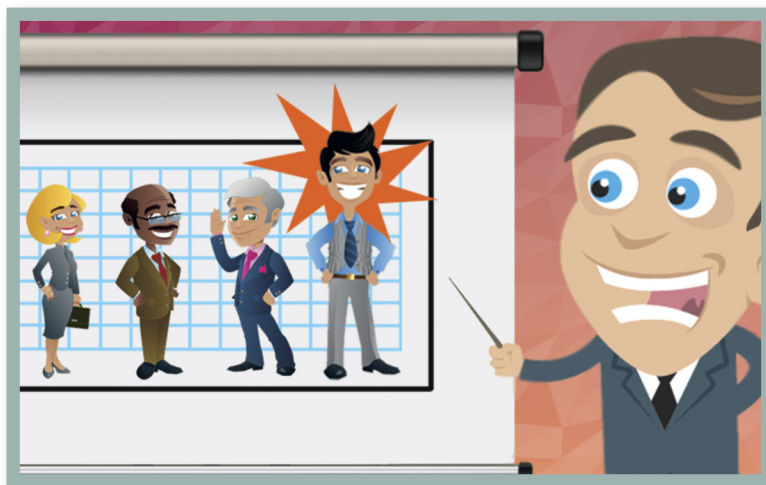


ESTABLISH THE BASELINE

FIRST, YOU MUST ESTABLISH the person's behaviors, mood, and mannerisms before the questioning begins. Is the person relaxed or nervous? Angry? Distracted? Do they normally speak in a monotonous tone? Notice how much eye contact and blinking is going on. Does the person normally touch his or her hands or face when speaking?

You might begin by asking questions to which you, the interrogator, already know the answers. Top investigators use this technique in their questioning of suspects by beginning with questions like, "What's your full name?" or "Where do you live?" Once they establish which type of "talker" a person is, that's when they begin asking questions that they don't know the answers to, keeping a careful eye on whether the manner of the person being questioned shifts abruptly. If the person changes, for example, from calm to agitated or from lively to mellow, chances are that person is not telling the truth. Someone lying will tend to get defensive while someone who is innocent will often go on the offensive.

Be careful not to approach this procedure with any preconceived notions. Liars may look you directly in the eye, and truth-tellers may be fidgety and seem evasive, so don't look for one trait or the other. Instead, allow *the person* to establish his or her own baseline for you. It is this self-established behavioral pattern against which you will base your decisions upon using the techniques outlined here.



LOOK FOR DEVIATIONS FROM THE BASELINE

ONCE YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED the baseline for the person, the key to detecting lies is to look for deviations from that established pattern of behavior. If a person normally makes no eye contact and blinks like crazy, but then stares straight through you when answering a particular question, that is a red flag. Look for slight pauses before answers. Their brain is taking this time to fabricate data. The liar may act offended at being questioned at all, but suddenly become quite affable when the lie is being told, or vice versa.



BODY LANGUAGE TO WATCH FOR

THE PHYSICAL EXPRESSION of a person who is lying can be limited and stiff, with few arm and hand movements. His or her hand, arm and leg movements will tend to be toward their own body. It is common for a person who is lying to avoid making eye contact, and will also touch his or her face, throat, and mouth. They may touch or scratch the nose or behind their ear. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, they are not likely to touch their chest/heart with an open hand. A guilty person will also tend to turn his or her body away from the questioner, uncomfortable in facing the interrogator straight on.

EXPRESSIONS CAN BE LIMITED to mouth movements, instead of the whole face, when someone is faking emotions. For example; when someone smiles naturally their whole face is involved: jaw/cheek movement, eyes and forehead push down, etc.

YOU SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE of the *timing* between gestures and emotions. Does the timing seem right, or is the timing between the emotion and the expression off? An example of this would be someone receiving a gift and exclaiming, "I love it!" and smiling after the statement. The smile and statement usually happen at the same time if the statement is a true one.

WATCH FOR UNNECESSARY FIDGETING. Take notice if the person you are talking to keeps performing a random physical action that seems unnecessary. This is where your initial work in establishing your baseline can be very helpful. Actions like cleaning their glasses excessively or dusting off the (clean) table in front of him or her may be a sign that the person is lying. Someone unconsciously placing an object, such as a book or coffee cup, between you and them might also be a sign. Guilt and anxiety makes a person restless. This is particularly true if the person is lying to someone he or she loves.



LISTEN

Sometimes, there will be no body language or visual cues that accompany a lie. You may have to rely solely on the verbal information you receive. Here are some things to listen for:

AVOIDANCE OF THE WORD "I"

QUITE OFTEN, WHEN PEOPLE are not being truthful, they will tend to use the word "I" less often; speaking about themselves in the third person, or truncating their answers, all in an a psychological attempt to distance themselves from the lie. Pronouns, in general, may be left out by the liar. When someone is telling the truth, they tend to emphasize the pronoun as much, or more, than the rest of the words in a statement.

And here's an interesting fact to remember: A statement with a contraction (IE: "I didn't do it" instead of "I did not do it") is *more likely to be truthful*.

ANSWERING WITH WHAT LOOKS LIKE WELL-REHEARSED ANSWERS

IF YOU WERE TO ASK someone what they were doing a week ago, that person would most likely have to take a moment to think about

it. This is true even more in teen-agers than adults, as teens do not have the mental capacity to tell an elaborate story "off the cuff." If the answers you receive appear to be immediate or well-planned, they could be lies.

REPEATEDLY COMMENTING THAT HE OR SHE IS BEING HONEST

LIARS OFTEN USE phrases like, "To be perfectly honest..." or "To tell you the truth..." These comments are all meant to back up the validity of their statements. Most truthful people do not have to go so far as to say things like, "As God is my witness..." or "I swear on my mother's grave..."

INDIRECT STATEMENTS AND GARBLED SPEECH

TO "AVOID LYING," people will use indirect statements. They will *imply* answers instead of denying something directly. On the opposite end of this coin, a liar can also use *your* words to answer the question. For example, your question, "Did you eat the last cookie?" will be answered, "No. I did not eat the last cookie."

Words may also be garbled and spoken softly. The syntax and grammar may be off. Sentences will be muddled rather than emphasized.

LISTEN WITH THE EAR of an investigator. Do the facts add up? Is the person telling you lots of information that is unrelated to the question? If someone provides lots of details, ask more questions. These details might be their undoing. After getting into the nitty-gritty of the details, bounce the questioning back to the overall time frame or arc of the story. Now, refocus on a small detail. Does the story still fit together? Is the person having to create new details to explain why other details aren't fitting well into the arc of the story?



PAUSE

FOR MOST PEOPLE, LYING — and the circumstance that necessitates the telling of a lie — is stressful. If you're questioning somebody, pause between one of his or her answers and your next question. Pauses are slightly uncomfortable for most people in a social interaction, and much more so for a person who is trying to pass off a lie. This pause may seem like a torturous eternity to a liar. As already mentioned, look for fidgeting and defensive posturing. Look also for what is known as micro-expressions (reactions caused by involuntary movements in facial muscles. Most people cannot control these involuntary muscles which are affected by their emotions.)

A pause is a great moment to watch for these tell-tale signs.



CHANGE THE SUBJECT

THE BEST NEWS a liar can receive is that the lie is over. When the person believes the topic of conversation has changed, he or she may be visibly relieved. A nervous person may loosen up; an agitated person may smile. This tactic also allows you to continue studying for deviations from the baseline or to look for a return to the baseline.

SOME IMPORTANT FINAL NOTES:

Please be aware that just because someone exhibits one or more of these signs, that does not necessarily make them a liar. Remember to always establish a baseline. That is very important. It is only then that you can compare a person's baseline (or normal) behavior to the behaviors listed here.

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