



Little White Lies

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

I suspect there is not a soul alive that has not told a lie at some point. Even though our parents taught us to tell the truth, sooner or later we have all violated the rule. If you have never told a lie, write to me and I will nominate you for sainthood. The thing about lying is that it is rather easily detected by observing the person's body language.

I recall one incident when my boss asked me if I had read a particular book. I said yes, but I really had not read it. I was pretty sure he saw through the fib. There must have been a dozen ways my body was saying "no" while my mouth was saying "yes." What is fascinating is the huge array of body language that is going on all of the time. It never stops, and much of the body language we send out is done unconsciously.

We see that kind of deception in children most easily. If you ask Johnny who tipped over the vase, he will shrug his shoulders indicating he does not know. If you ask "was it you," he will say "no." He is afraid he will be in trouble if he tells the truth. But all parents know to watch the eyes for the truth. The mother knows instantly that Johnny not only knows who broke the vase but that it was him. We teach our children that the bigger sin is to hide the truth than to break the vase, but only some of them learn the lesson.

It is sad that so many people in positions of authority never did learn that lesson and get caught time after time in lies or half truths. It is so common with politicians or celebrities that we end up wondering if any of them can be trusted. I am sure some of them can be, but my first inclination is to not believe what any of them say, especially if they are accused of doing something wrong. They might say it is a "no spin zone," but if you believe that I have a bridge I want to sell you.

What adults need to realize is what we try to teach our children: it is better to be honest and admit the mistakes we make, because all human beings are fallible. Lying about a misstep is easily detected because we cannot hide our subconscious body language. Next time you are tempted to tell a half-truth, remember that your credibility is on the

line, and do not follow the example of many public figures who frequently embarrass themselves.

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