

“Are You Lying To Me?”

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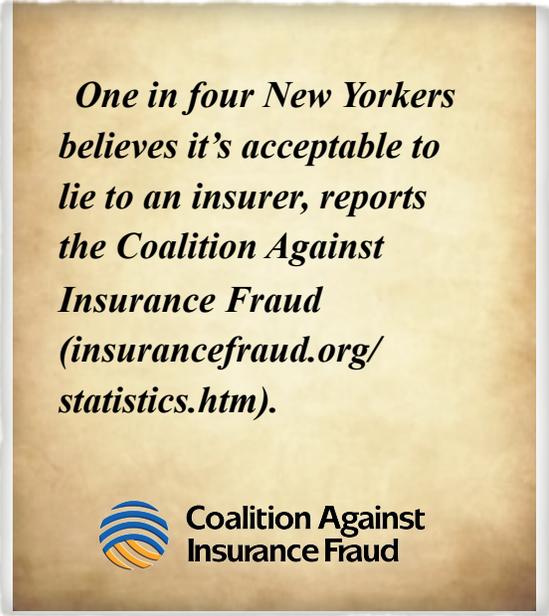
Do you lie or otherwise distort the truth? Perhaps you’d say “no”—or at least “not often.” If that’s your answer, either you’re statistically more honest than most people or you’re lying right now.

Believe it or not, a 2016 study of social media in the United Kingdom found that more than 75% of respondents admitted to lying about themselves on their social media profiles. This finding is consistent with those of an older study conducted by a University of Massachusetts psychologist, which found that 60% of adults can’t have a 10-minute conversation without lying at least once; in fact, they typically tell an average of two to three lies in this short span.

Pamela Meyer, author of *Liespotting: Proven Techniques to Detect Deception* (St. Martin’s Press, New York, N.Y., 2010), goes even further, adding that humans lie about 200 times per day. In addition, 90% of children have a clear understanding of lying by the age of four. This may seem a bit twisted, but we learn to lie early in life because lying actually facilitates social interactions. Surprisingly, most of us learn from our parents how to lie. For example, when kids receive a gift they don’t like from a friend or relative, the parents often encourage them to lie about their feelings. Knowing when to remain silent or to tell a white lie is, in fact, based on a social belief that we don’t want to hear hurtful things.

Granted, most lies don’t have serious consequences or aren’t very important. At least that’s what we tell ourselves. Quite often we lie about trivial issues that have little significance (“You look nice today!”). Perhaps we lie to try to impress someone—to make ourselves look better than we actually are. For instance, several studies (and a pile of anecdotal evidence from those who have been deceived) indicate that people looking for a date online stretch the truth when constructing their profile. Maybe we lie because it’s just easier or more expedient to lie than to drag out a complicated, unimportant story that we know won’t matter anyway.

On the other hand, lies can create problems that result in extreme damage in various dimensions of our lives, such as with personal finances, work relationships, marriage, and emotional and trust issues. (For more, see “Who Isn’t Telling the Truth?”)



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Coalition Against Insurance Fraud

Who Isn’t Telling the Truth?

According to HireRight’s 2017 Employment Screening Benchmark Report, 85% of human resource professionals reported they’ve caught a lie or misrepresentation on a résumé or job application. This is up from 66% of survey respondents five years ago (hireright.com/benchmarking).

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Closer to home for accountants, one in three (36%) organizations reported being hit by economic crime in the last 12 months, according to PwC’s 2016 Global Economic Crime Survey (https://pwc.to/2Bd0IoK).

From the same PwC study, one in five respondents said they were unaware of any formal ethics and compliance program at their firm, even though 82% of companies reported having a formal plan in place.

Overall, deception costs businesses \$3.7 trillion per year—roughly 5% of annual revenue, according to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. Truth, our overall psychological health improves when we tell fewer lies. (For more, see Kare Anderson, “Seven Somewhat Unexpected