
*Why They Lie
And What to Do About It*

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Lying Isn't a One Person Job

- Lies are a social behavior that occurs between two or more people
 - Therefore both people have the power to make them more or less likely
- ADHD can make lying more likely
 - ADHD can also make bad reactions from others more likely
- The truth is earned and both people need to do their part
 - Lying leads to bad reactions—but also vice versa

DEFINE LYING

It's All About Intent

- Lying saying something false with an intent to deceive
 - Saying something incorrect isn't lying if you believe it
- Folks with ADHD sometimes get the facts wrong, misremember, or their stories evolve
 - We look for a pattern of behavior to infer intent, and they've used up their free passes—but it's not necessarily a lie

Lies Benefit the Present

- Lies make the present easier, more comfortable, less stressful, or less conflictual
 - The price is paid later (but hopefully not!)
- Lies let us have it both ways:
 - Doing what we want without suffering the social consequences
 - Getting the credit without doing the work
 - Getting things our way without a difficult negotiation
- Pathological lying is much more chronic and self-serving

It's Not Always Black and White

- Some lies are factual—right or wrong
- Sometimes we shade the truth
 - Conveniently round up or down to suit our needs
 - If you're standing on a technicality, then you know you're lying
- Lies of omission—knowingly withholding information that the other person would want
 - Also ongoing when continue to allow other person to maintain their belief

Past, Present & Future

- Most lies involve the past
 - What did or didn't happen
 - And perhaps in the present if we stick to it

- Sometimes lies involve intentions for the future
 - False agreements are lies and involve an intent to deceive
 - But ADHD can make it harder to convert intentions consistently into actions—so was it a lie?
 - Perhaps look at effort and prior truthfulness

Lies Double the Problems

- Lies make one problem into two:
 - The initial problem
 - The lie—which may actually be bigger

- Lies can change how the other person sees the liar
 - And how they see themselves if they feel foolish for believing

Sometimes We Lie to Ourselves

- We lie to ourselves when we optimistically let ourselves believe something overly convenient
 - “I’ll get to that in a minute.”
 - “This isn’t *that much* ice cream.”
- We may also over-promise to others but kind of believe it
 - So perhaps it isn’t a lie to the other person?

ADHD Can Make Lying Easier

- ADHD makes it harder to hold back impulsively blurting out the desired answer
 - Without really pausing to think it through
 - ADHD can also create stronger emotional reactions which drive impulsivity

- ADHD can create more situations where it's tempting to lie
 - Specifically in the moment when there are no good options
 - Generally when life feels more chronically overwhelming

Bad situations make bad choices more likely.

And bad reactions to those choices.

Here We Go Again

- Those with ADHD get more corrections and criticisms
 - It's understandable, but enough already. . .
- This impacts how they are seen by others
 - When in doubt, they're the one who's blamed
- This impacts how they see themselves
 - They don't want to be the problematic one (again), so it's tempting to try to dodge that bullet

LIARS AND LIE INVITERS

Where Does the Circle Begin?

- Lies cast long shadows
 - You can't blame others for not being trusting if you aren't trustworthy
- Bad reactions also cast long shadows
 - You can't blame others for not being trustworthy if you over-react
- Each person's behavior justifies the other's
 - But neither is happy

Honesty is Hard

- Two laws of honesty:
 - 1. You can't punish honesty and expect the truth
 - 2. You can't lie about one thing and expect to be believed about the rest

- Liars are the obvious culprit, but is the other person inviting lies?
 - If so, this is an important but often neglected point of intervention

How to Punish Honesty

- Bad reactions to disclosure:
 - ❑ Anger, threats
 - ❑ Guilting, piling it on, character attacks
 - ❑ Falling apart, playing the martyr
 - ❑ Silent treatment

- Does your response to bad news open up or shut down honesty and discussion?
 - ❑ No matter how well deserved

Truth is an Inside Job First

- In those difficult moments, we need to first be honest with ourselves
 - We need to be able to calm down enough to own the painful truth
- Then we need to face the repercussions from others
 - Lie inviter's judgment (or expectation of it) evokes liar's insecurities
 - The liar's inconsistencies evoke a sense of instability in the lie inviter

An Escalating Dynamic

- A history of lying can make the other person more of a micromanager/fact-checker
 - It can become more about power and self-determination than the topic of the lies

- Both people can feel like the other person has too much influence over their destiny/happiness
 - Let the tug of war commence!

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

Keep Your Head On

- **Prioritize what it will take to live a saner life**
 - Sleep, diet, exercise
 - Discuss reasonable expectations
 - Possibly medication (for ADHD, anxiety, depression)
 - Avoid problematic coping methods
- **Master your shame or anxiety**
 - We all have some struggles—what is an acceptable amount for you?
 - Family therapy can change problematic relationship dynamics

Get It Done, Then Move On

- Relationships aren't court rooms, so sometimes the exact facts don't matter
 - Is it a difference without a difference?
- Maybe just focus on fixing what needs to be fixed
- Deal with what the situation is now, not how you got there
- When in doubt, partially own it:
 - "I don't know what happened there, but if I did that, then I am really sorry."

Regain Your Reputation

- Become more believable by admitting bad news
 - But try to limit how much bad news you have
 - Gives you more credibility when you say things are good

- Use a good process to increase trust
 - E.g., put a reminder in your phone
 - Then hold yourself to it when the moment comes
 - Make a point of letting the other person know you did it

Actively Manage Expectations

- Actively manage what people expect of you so there is less pressure to lie later
 - May mean wrestling it out up-front
 - Don't over-promise or let someone stubbornly over-expect

- “I want to do a good job, but I don't want to set me up for failure and you up for disappointment.”
 - Perhaps promise to do your best, but acknowledge that it may not work out

If You Screwed Up, Then Fix It

- Take the heat in the moment
 - ❑ Admit your part
 - ❑ Acknowledge the impact on the other person
 - ❑ Make amends
 - ❑ Say what you will do next time—but don't over-promise!

- If you lied, correct the record ASAP
 - ❑ Eliminates the ongoing lie of omission
 - ❑ Don't punish this delayed honesty!

Stop Inviting Lies by Managing Your Reactions

- Show that you can handle the truth by reacting well
 - Remind yourself of the bigger picture—there will definitely be a next time
- Be clear about your priorities—what is most important to you?
 - What are you unwilling to flex on?
 - What else are you therefore willing to flex on?
 - Would you rather be right or happy?

Deal With It, Then Move On

- If you are upset about what happened, deal with it directly
 - Perhaps focus on the future more than the past
- Don't beat a dead horse or run the laundry list
 - Or you will become Charlie Brown's teacher
- A bad reaction changes the topic of conversation to your reaction
 - Or becomes the only thing the other person remembers

Integrity Matters Most

- Ultimately, we are responsible to our own conscience and sense of who we want to be
 - Even when the other person isn't doing a good job
- This takes other's feelings into account, but goes beyond it
- The challenge in the heat of the moment is to keep this image of our better self clearly in mind
 - And then requires emotional self-regulation to hold it

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