

Lies & Deception: Four Types of Lies

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We're going to talk about lies, deception, betrayal, infidelity and jealousy. Particularly confronting lies and deception and what it take for us as therapists to do some of this work and what it takes for partners to be able to develop the courage.

In the early stages when couples get together they tend to tell each other what we call "Loving Lies." And Loving Lies are interesting because they in fact increase the bonding. Many of you said you remember that wonderful exhilarating feeling of falling in love. That feeling actually gets perpetuated longer when people promote the ways they're alike and their similarities. And so in promoting the similarity you actually can help to promote that feeling of "we were meant for each other," "we're truly in love." Sometimes I call it a temporary psychosis.

Some of these kinds of lies are designed to build up the self-esteem of your partner. And you can have some funny things like, "No, your hair looks great. I promise!" Or "You're a terrific cook" when you really can't stand what it was they cooked. Or you tell your partner that they're the sexiest person you know.

So the "Honeymoon Stage" lies are designed to promote the illusion of similarity and of perfect compatibility. And so at this stage people tend to omit a lot of things that they think might be disruptive to that connection in some way. They are often mute about things that they think will cause tension.

In fact, Pete had a wonderful Loving Lie that he perpetuated on me in the early years when we first met. When we first meet he lived in Louisiana and I

lived in California and every time I would fly out to visit him, his apartment was spotless. And I had no idea that a maid had been there for the 2 hours just before I got there! He really did, he had me fooled.

The longer that people are able to promote that harmless stage, it does really encourage and support the beginning of a solid foundation. Actually if we truly love each other, we're in this together; we're forming a clear boundary around the two of us as a couple.

Now what happens in so many relationships is you get the "dark side of the honeymoon." And in the dark side of the honeymoon what begins to occur is that instead of partners being able to move into an effective differentiation stage they begin to excessively become conflict avoidant with each other.

And so you get this process where people start to hide and not face the real issues. There are differentiation based issues that come up in every single couple and those can be as simple as figuring out who wants to do what part of the house work and really getting clear about what works and what doesn't work.

I mean Pete likes to iron, but I think every couple is like that where there's idiosyncrasies that are not gender based, that don't fit the norm, don't fit the stereotype. They have trouble engaging with each other in figuring out "what really works for you and what really works for me?" Instead they hide from each other.

Lots of the research that has gone on about lies and deception shows that unlike what you might think, people who are in committed partnerships have a harder time telling when their partners are lying than they do telling if a friend or stranger is lying. So it appears that the closer you get to somebody there is a sense that you are going to trust them and not be as aware when something is hidden.

Next is Conflict Avoiding Lies. On this slide I put up a number of things that are part of conflict avoiding lies. You might be finessing the truth, you might be hiding relevant details of a tough topic, lots of lies of omission, sometimes very sneaky behavior to cover up something you are ashamed of.

Then you get more Passive Aggressive Lies and Felony Lies.

And Passive Aggressive Lies are lies that show up often when they are covering their tracks, when they say they will do something and then they have no intention to do it and they don't do it. They deny accountability and sometimes hint that their partner is the one who is actually responsible for the lies.

So many Passive Aggressive Lies come about around division of roles and responsibilities in a relationship and people making commitments to each other and then not living out their part of the commitment.

And then the last one is what we call Felony Lies. These lies are purposeful. They may be done for individual gain. They're definitely done to hide and cover up.

To me one of the worst ones is the one where a partner's sanity is challenged. And it is a pretty common sequence when there is infidelity and somebody is having an affair and the partner picks up on it and starts to ask questions. And then not only are they lied to but they're told, "you're crazy, you're nuts, you're making this up."

Some other Felony Lies are: having unprotected sex with multiple partners or with prostitutes, lying about issues related to health, lying about gambling, giving a lot of money to a person you are having an affair with.

And another one that I think fits into the felony category is people who have affairs and take their children with them to get very close to the affair partner

before their spouse knows about the affair. So they develop a relationship between their children and the person they're having the affair with.

How many of you have seen couples like this with the felony lying that has gone on around infidelity and the crazy making?

And sometimes it's even hard for us, as therapists, when we're brought in to know who is telling the truth and who is not telling the truth.

Stay tuned for the surprising research about detecting lies and six critical guidelines to help you recognize the truth.