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# The Truth About Lying

by JOHN BOE



**Some people can't tell a lie, others can't tell the truth, and unfortunately, most people can't tell the difference.**

Can you tell when someone is pulling the wool over your eyes? Whether you're an attorney selecting a jury, a manager interviewing a new agent or a salesperson making a presentation, your ability to quickly and accurately discern the truth greatly enhances your effectiveness. Fortunately, having the ability to sort fact from fiction is an important communication skill that can be learned.

Aside from con men, compulsive liars and some politicians, most people become uncomfortable when telling a lie and transmit their deceitful behavior through their body language. While they may sound convincing, their gestures speak louder than their words. Consequently, they reveal their deceit non-verbally. While it's not always easy

to spot deceptive behavior, there are many subtle yet discernable clues to the trained eye.

Body language is a mixture of movement, posture and tone of voice. Studies show that nonverbal communication has a much greater impact and reliability than the spoken word. Therefore, if a person's words are incongruent with his or her body language gestures, you would be wise to rely on the body language as a more accurate reflection of their true feelings. During the selling process, it's important to remember that body language is not a one-way street. While you're evaluating your prospect's body language for signs of honesty and credibility, he or she is subconsciously observing and reacting to your gestures as well.

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## Some People Can't Handle the Truth

The truth sometimes hurts, and few business or personal relationships could survive the harsh reality of total honesty. While honesty is certainly the best policy, the truth is, that in our day-to-day encounters, it's not always diplomatic or socially acceptable to be completely honest. To spare the feelings of others, we have learned the usefulness of telling half-truths, fibs and white lies.

During the selling process, some people have difficulty saying "No," and will actually tell you that they are interested in order to avoid potential conflict. As the pressure of making a decision builds, prospects will frequently use half-truths or lies to either stall or disengage from the selling sequence. While your prospect's words say "Yes," his or her body language indicates "No way." By being able to recognize the inconsistency between your prospect's words and his or her gestures, it is often possible to flush out con-

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cerns, overcome their objections and make the sale.

### **See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil**

Eye, nose and mouth movement, along with hand gestures, are the four major nonverbal cues typically associated with lying. The statue of the Three Wise Monkeys accurately depicts the primary hand-to-face gestures associated with deceit. When a person is doubtful or lying, they'll often use their fingers to block their mouth as if they were filtering their words. This hand-to-mouth gesture is commonly referred to as "speak no evil." The second hand gesture associated with deceit is called "see no evil," and it occurs when a person rubs or touches his or her eye(s). The third hand gesture "hear no evil" is displayed when a person covers or drills a finger into his or her ear(s).

If people use one of these gestures while they're talking, it indicates that they are being deceitful. On the other hand, if they are displaying one of these gestures while someone else is talking it indicates that they doubt the truthfulness of what is being said. These three gestures should be considered red flags. When you encounter one of these gestures during your presentation, it is a good idea to gently probe the

subject matter with open-ended questions to encourage your prospect to voice his or her concern.

In addition to the three hand-to-face gestures, eye movement is another reliable indication of deceit. It's normal for a person to look up to his or her left when thinking about the past and up to the right when thinking about the future. If you ask a person a question from his or her past and they look up to their right, they're making up a response. Law enforcement personnel and customs agents are trained to routinely monitor eye movement during interviews.

### **Micro Gestures**

According to Paul Ekman, professor of psychology at the University of California, San Francisco, two of the most common micro gestures that are associated with deceit are the nose wrinkle and the mouth curl. The nose wrinkle is the same gesture that occurs naturally when you smell something offensive. The other facial micro gesture is a slight downward curl of the corners of the mouth. Even liars who make a conscious effort to suppress all of their major body gestures, will still transmit micro gestures. People sometimes lie, but their body language always tells the truth! □

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**



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