

The Diversity of Lying



Most parents scold their children when they tell lies, but all children grow up to become liars anyway. This is because being able to tell a good lie in certain circumstances is an important social skill. For example, if your friend asks you what you think of his/her new hairstyle, even if you hate it, would you say so? Most people in this situation would probably tell a lie so as not to hurt their friend's feelings. It is certainly true that a person who is too honest is likely to have few friends. On the other hand, nobody likes a person who tells too many lies either. Perhaps your future success in life will mainly depend on how skillfully you learn the system of lying.

Of course, not all lies are the same. In English a "white lie" is a lie made in the better interests of something or someone other than the liar. Although a white lie is still technically a lie, it is not considered to be as bad as some other kinds of lies. The lies people in love often tell each other are also easily forgiven, because the condition of being in love is seen as a kind of illness which blinds people to everyday realities.

The lies that politicians make during election campaigns are another category of "semi" lies. For example, a certain politician might find that what he promised is either impossible or not sensible. By turning his pre-election promise into a lie though not carrying it out, we could say that the politician was simply making the compromises and practicing the pragmatism which is politics. More cynically, we could say that the politician was a dishonest liar who would promise you anything to get your vote.

This is the problem with lying, because in some situations it is impossible to tell with absolute certainty whether someone is lying or telling the truth, we ourselves are forced to become the ultimate judge of what is the truth and what is a lie. You could say that in this situation we create truth and untruth. On the other hand, perhaps this is just another lie.

1. When is it OK to tell a lie?
2. Have you ever lied to someone? your partner, friend, spouse, boss, stranger, children...etc.
3. Have you ever lied to spare someone's feelings? Give an example
4. When do you prefer someone to lie to you? your cooking, talent, skill, intelligence, fashion sense, appearance...etc.