

Tell The Truth, as if it were Lies

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We live in a world where we have come to expect the truth that we are lied to pretty regularly. These lies range from those told in the school playground, or those that get us out of seeing a friend who we really don't like anymore, all the way up to the lies told in the press and by the world's governments. However, in such a climate of lies do we accept the truth as something malleable, something to be manipulated in order to make life easier, more bearable? Or rather, are the lies we are told simple tortures to our minds that have to work ever harder to rationalise our lives? Relate this to relationships, whether they are friendships or romances and things get even more volatile, yet we must ask ourselves: in a dishonest world, is honesty the best policy?

There is, so it has been advocated, something liberating about the truth, something moral and courageous about being honest. Yet, why do so many live in the comfort of lies and dishonesty. If all we crave is the simple truth, then why are we not treated to it? Do we in fact tell ourselves that we want to know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but secretly wish to be given the sugar coated, slightly romanticised white lie version of the story instead?

Of course there is a distinction in the severity of the lie and the nature in which it is told. Lying in court is illegal, rightly so, perjury can lead to the miscarriage of justice and wrongful persecution. Why then, if our law courts, the beacon for morality and social justice demand total honesty do we not demand the same of lesser social institutions? Why should lying in court differ from lying to a child about a sick relative or a pet that has died? Of course, in the case of the child, the justification is that they are being protected from a harsh reality. However, is reality made ever harsher from the lies that we spin?

Surely, if we were to spread an honest representation of how life is, through all of its defects and instances of bad luck and ill health, we would slowly come to accept fate and soon learn to live just as we are now? The problem perhaps lies in the initial stages of such a social revolution, how do you manage a society of people fed only the truth and encouraged to digest it whole? Here then is the motivation for Orwell's 1984 and many real government cover ups, all of which claim to have the welfare of the citizen at heart. So then, lies are told to guild the truth and oil the cogs of society to ensure that all is kept relatively calm and in order?

Let us leave aside for the moment such lofty examples and look simply at the lies we tell to those we love. What motivates us here? Is it again a desire to protect those closest to us, to preserve their optimism and prolong their belief in all that is good? Or perhaps, there is something more narcissistic about the lies told? Consider, the small dishonesties we advertise about ourselves when we meet new people, what goes through our heads at this point? Surely, if we are honest, if we tell them all there is to know about us, they shall run a mile, no, much better to present the best bits, with a bit of dramatic fabrication just to make sure their interest is maintained. Here then are the lies we tell to again present a reality, free of the dangers of the actual truth. Nobody is ever keen to give the whole truth of themselves away just in case it means they lose the chance to get to know somebody whom they are keen on. Are these lies dangerous? Should we cease these small lies and broadcast the total truth of ourselves to everyone?

Then there are those lies, that perhaps aren't even lies, they are merely silences, but in being silent, speak volumes more than the most elaborate lie and leave you just as confused. Take for example a guy that I was getting along with rather well, we had seen each other for numerous dates over a period of about two weeks, conversation flowed and there was something, (or at least I believed there to be) of a spark between us. However, after these two weeks, all communication ended. Obviously I was confused, but allowed the silence for a few days and tried to get back in touch; still nothing. What had so dramatically changed to have encouraged all loss of contact? To this day, I could not give you the answer. Yet, in there being no explanation at all I think I feel worse, in a way, a lie would have been a better option, I could have used it to move on.

So here then is a perplexing cross roads. I believe in honesty at all costs, even if that means potentially having to explain yourself further or deal with a more complicated situation, to lie is only to put off the eventual revelation. However, as discussed, lies can be protective, especially for smaller children where the truth is too abstract for them to make use of. Then there are the silences, where truth and dishonesty are both absent, here; who knows, perhaps again the truth is better, but even a lie can work to absolve some of the self blame or time spent contemplating, why and what if. Perjury in court is illegal and lying at school is often punished, yet as a society we are surrounded by the lies of the media and political powers who think perhaps they are above such fundamental concepts. Whatever benefits the truth has over dishonesty or indeed at times dishonesty over truth perhaps an individual appraisal is needed and then of course we let our conscience decide, which for now, is a whole other issue.