

Is It OK to Lie?

**SOMETIMES WE STRETCH THE TRUTH TO BE COURTEOUS.
 BUT WHERE SHOULD WE DRAW THE LINE?**

What would you do? Your best friend shows up at school with a new haircut.

It is not a good haircut.

Actually, it looks like he lost a wrestling match with a lawnmower.

“What do you think?” he asks, looking you straight in the eye.

Your heart races. Your mind swirls. It’s obvious your buddy feels insecure about his new look and is hoping for your approval.

You really don’t want to hurt his feelings. You should just tell him his hair looks great, right?

But wait.

Wouldn’t that be lying? And isn’t lying . . . *wrong*?

Living With Lies

Wrong or not, the truth is that we all lie—a lot. Experts say that most people lie at least twice a day. In other words, we bend the truth about as often as we brush our teeth!

A lie is a statement that is deliberately meant to mislead. Many people feel that any lie—no matter how minor or well-intentioned—is morally

wrong. We depend on each other to be honest, and deceiving those we care about can damage our relationships. Plus, if we can’t assume that others are telling the truth, how can we ever trust anything we hear or read?

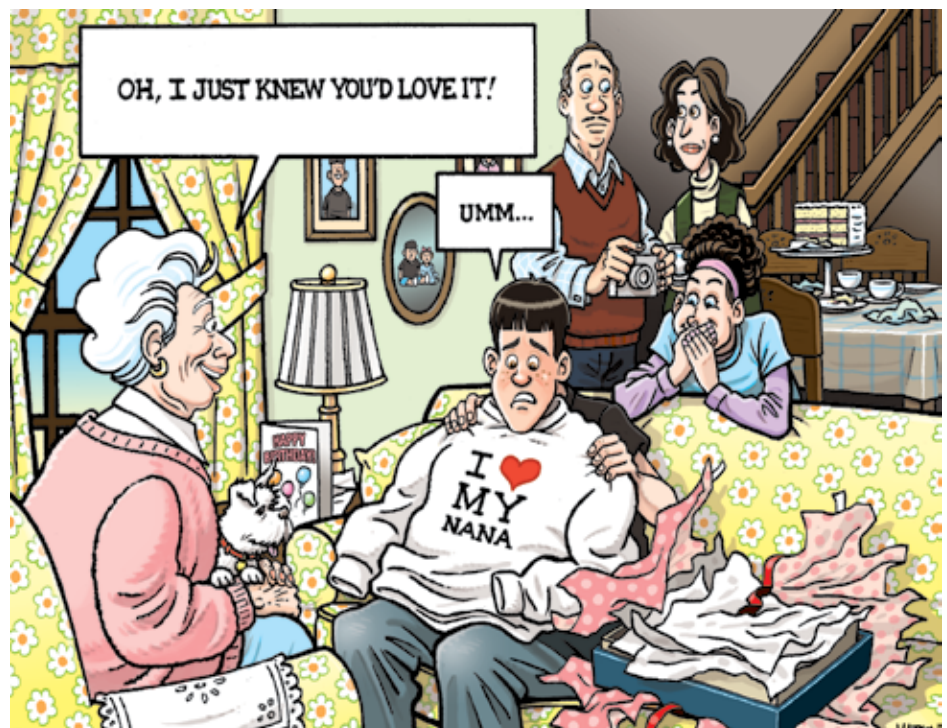
What’s the Big Deal?

You’ve probably told a few fibs that seemed perfectly harmless—but were they really? Getting used to telling tiny lies, experts say, makes us more likely to tell bigger,

more harmful lies in the future.

“The problem with small lies is that they accumulate and we lose track of them,” says Howard Temple, who administers lie-detector tests for a living.

Once you tell a lie (for example, claiming Justin Bieber is your cousin), you might have to tell more lies to keep up the charade (you’re going to Ontario to visit Justin over winter break). Before you know it, you’ll be terrified of running into your friends over the



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holidays because you're supposed to be in Canada hanging with the Biebs.

Better Be Polite

Still, many experts feel that lying has its place—especially when it's done to protect someone's feelings. "Most of the time, being kind to someone is more important than telling the absolute truth," says Jane Frank, a New York City psychologist.

It turns out that lying might even be *good* for you. Studies show that people who tell "polite" white lies are happier and more popular than those who insist on the brutal truth.

Perhaps the key is to think about why you're lying in the first place. There's a big difference between lying to spare yourself—like faking sick to miss a big test—and lying to make someone feel better. Of course, even lying out of kindness can be complicated. It would be pretty cruel to tell your sister she has a terrible singing voice. But if she's planning to audition for *American Idol*, being honest could save her from some serious humiliation and nationally televised ridicule.

So what do you tell your friend about his horrendous haircut? The truth or a lie?

Well, there is a third option: Don't say anything. Instead, look at your watch, have a sudden coughing fit, and do your best to change the subject.

Then go buy him a nice hat. ●

What Do You Think?

Is it OK to lie? Go back to the article to find arguments that support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



YES

I LIE LIKE A RUG!

1 Lies can spare someone's feelings.

2 _____

3 _____

NO

HONESTY IS MY POLICY.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide what you think about this issue. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become a thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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