

How to Tell if Someone is Lying to You: 6 Signs to Look for

In an era increasingly described as “post truth,” classifying a lie is no simple task. Recognizing deceptive behavior, however, is another story.

Pamela Meyer, a certified fraud examiner and self-identified “lie spotter,” says humans lie *a lot*. (In fact, a person is typically lied to between 10 and 200 times per day, she says.) But when people lie, they often give away certain tells.

Meyer, a Harvard-educated entrepreneur, is the author of [Liespotting: Proven Techniques to Detect Deception](#). In a 2011 Ted Talk, she discusses several flags that suggest someone might not be telling the truth.

1. Their Smile is All Wrong

People tend to smile when they lie. Oftentimes, however, their smile is not a natural one. Meyer cites two types of smiles that often betray the liar. The first is a fake smile.

“A trained lie spotter can spot a fake smile a mile away,” Meyer says.

The giveaway, she says, is that the smile does not touch the eyes. Cheek muscles can be consciously controlled; the crow’s feet of the eyes, however, cannot be consciously contracted.

The second tell that betrays liars is the “duping smile.” Liars, it turns out, often experience a feeling of glee or elation while they lie, probably because they feel they might be getting away with something. Bright, smug smiles can flash from their faces, a reaction that is beyond their control.

“That smile is known in the trade as ‘duping delight,’” Meyer says.



2. Their Eye Movements Are Unusual

One of the most famous tells of a liar is that they can't make eye contact with the person they are lying to. But liars know this. To compensate, they will often hold eye contact for an unnatural length of time.

Also, lying can be stressful. As a result, people often will [blink their eyes more](#) while lying, especially if one is facing a tough interrogation.

“We know liars will shift their blink rate,” Meyer says.

If you believe someone is lying to you, closely monitor the person's blinking. If his eyes do this (see below), it's a strong indication the person may be lying.

3. Words and Body Language Say Different Things

Oftentimes liars know exactly what they're going to say, but getting their body to fully cooperate is not easy. It's not uncommon for a liar's body to answer a question truthfully even while he is deceiving with his words. Meyer points to the interview of former U.S. Senator John Edwards, who denied he had fathered a child with a woman working on his campaign. Twice during an interview with a journalist, Edwards expressed his willingness to take a paternity test—while shaking his head. (11:55 mark below)

4. They Use Qualifying Language

Liars will often preface their statements with language designed to establish their veracity. Meyers cites statements such as “Well, to tell you the truth ...” and “In all candor...” (a favorite of Richard Nixon) as examples.

Sometimes this technique is used simply to buy time for someone trying to think up an answer, similar to the tactic of repeating a question in its entirety aloud before responding.

5. They Stick to a Strict Chronological Story

Liars often rehearse their lies. The easiest way to remember a story is to memorize it chronologically. When someone is lying, they want to stick to that script. This is why a good police interrogator works to get their subject off point.

“What a trained interrogator does is they come in and in very subtle ways over the course of several hours, they will ask that person to tell that story backwards,” Meyer says. “And then they’ll watch them squirm, and track which questions produce the highest volume of deceptive tells.”

6. They Try to Distance Themselves from Their Subject

Liars often are uncomfortable when they are lying to someone. As a result, they’re mind will often take steps to create separation from the person or people they’re lying to.

“We know that liars will unconsciously distance themselves from their subject,” Meyer says.

It could be a physical object—a computer, a stack of books, etc. —or it could be reflected in the liar’s language.

All of these behaviors, Meyer points out, are just that: behaviors. They are not proof that someone is lying to you or being deceptive. The trick is knowing what to look for and identifying a pattern.

“When you see clusters of them,” Meyers says, “that’s your signal.”

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