

CHARLES DAVID CAVANAUGH - 17 JANUARY 2010
1

TITLE:

I am sorry to tell you this, but our world is filled with people who don't tell the truth. Don't believe me? Well, I can go that one better. Right here in Hopkinsville, perhaps in this very room, there are people who lie. Now I know that you aren't one of them, and I certainly am not, but they are here, and you better believe me.

One thing you need to know about liars is that they want you to believe them, and they want you to think that telling the truth is a big deal to them. Let me give you an example. Several years ago, George Washington cut down a cherry tree. You probably heard about it. He might have been as old as fifteen or possibly a pre-teen, but we know he cut it down. In all the world and certainly not on his plantation was there a tree that George's dad loved as much as he did that tree. During those years, the Washingtons were kind of like the Kennedys of the 1950's. They were very wealthy, always in the limelight, and very politically minded. George's dad had already decided exactly what the boys would be doing when they grew up. Edgar would be mayor of Raleigh. Phillip would be governor of Virginia. Oath would take over the plantation, and George would be "Father of our Country." But with their high aspirations came great responsibility. Mr. Washington had to make sure that the boys kept their noses clean or at least if they didn't, he had to make sure that the public didn't know about their transgressions. He did have some experience in dealing with problems like this. Only a year ago, Oath had held a press conference and admitted that he was at the helm of a ship that sank after running into a flatboat carrying chickens, hogs, and two horses. He said that he regretted the loss of the chickens, but was happy that the hogs and horses made it to shore. Nothing was said about the all-night party, the ale, the women, the sword that he used to commandeer the ship, or the pony with the keg strapped to his back. It was all pretty easy. Oath was forgiven and accepted back in everyone's graces. But Mr. Washington knew that this cherry tree incident would be different. Because of the "Father of our Country" plans, he knew that he needed damage control. He contacted John Franklin in Philadelphia

because he knew Mr. Franklin had similar problems with one of his sons. Mr. Franklin recommended a group by the name of Republic Spin Doctors. They were contacted and left for Virginia that very day.

Their arrival at the Washington plantation was welcome because word of the cherry tree incident had already reached the voting constituency. As Mr. Washington feared, the story got worse with each telling. Many were saying that it was an act of defiance toward his father. Others said that George was going to build a boat out of the wood and go look for Oath's pony. There was even a song sung in some local taverns about using the wood to make teeth.

Spin doctors arrived on Thursday and had already formulated the basic aspects of their plan. They told Mr. Washington that they had to take control of the story. They would release facts that were already known as well as some that were not yet discovered but soon would be. A heartfelt apology would be part of the presentation. Some facts would need to be left out and some altered, but those were minor details that even the most meticulous investigative reporter was not likely to discover.

On Friday, George spoke at City Hall at 1 p.m. The timing allowed his statement to be carried by the evening papers without allowing time for his detractors to prepare a statement. It was hoped that the story would be old news by Monday.

George gave his explanation, apologized publically to his father and to all Americans, and symbolically broke an ax handle. You know the rest of the story.

You have probably detected some holes in this story. The timing is wrong, most of the people did not exist, and George probably never chopped down a cherry tree. Even if he did and if there had been real significance to the act, it certainly would not have been handled in such a ridiculous manner. But today, we see lots of famous people bailed out of bad situations by their professional handlers. Bill Clinton, Michael Jordan, Michael Vick, Kobe Bryant, Rick Pitino and Alex Rodriguez have all hired damage control experts at one time or another. If he didn't, Barry Bonds should have. Tiger Woods

probably is now or soon will be seeking help. Mark Sanford's handlers spent considerable time explaining the geographical gaffe that allowed him to hike the Appalachian Trail while in Brazil.

The procedure generally concludes with the accused party speaking at a press conference and apologizing to his wife, the fans, voters, her husband, the IRS, his team, and to all those people who believed in him. They also promise to never do it again, to seek help, to respect the rights of others, to say please and thank you, and to come out of this a better person. They all say different things, but they all do the same thing. They tell some of the truth or none of the truth. In summary, they lie.

While these famous people are lying at press conferences, we are lying in our homes, or in our places of business, or even in our churches. Anywhere we can find people to talk to, we find an opportunity to not tell the truth. Think I am making too big a deal out of this? As of this week, there are 899,005 books with "lying" in the title. Titles like When Your Lover is a Liar, Liar's Poker, The Liars' Club, Pretty Little Liars, and Why Do Lovers Lie? should be on everyone's must-read list. There are 5,570,000 songs. We are surrounded.

Lying is the most common wrong act that we carry out. It is a control characteristic of life. Parents lie to children about sex to protect them from knowledge that would be harmful. Years later, adolescents conceal sexual adventures from parents. Lies occur between friends, teacher and student, doctor and patient, husband and wife, witness and jury, and lawyer and client. "That is my final offer." Such language is not only accepted in the business world; it is expected. No one is expected to put all of his cards on the table at the onset.

We try to prevent lying in the courts of our land by asking witnesses to "swear to tell the truth, the whole truth..." Don't forget that lying is the only thing that will cause your nose to grow. If that was a bit more reliable, it would make swearing in court unnecessary.

James Loewen, a professor at the University of Vermont, has written two books about lying. In his second, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, he complains about lies in U.S. History textbooks. He relates

stories about facts that are withheld or changed in order to make American heroes look better. He says that the inclusion of these truths would give students a clearer picture of the individuals that they study. For instance, in most texts, Helen Keller is spoken of as a child who overcame her physical disabilities but her political activities as an adult were not mentioned. Without exception, all textbooks refer to military genius as the means by which Europeans conquered Native Americans. No book recounts the horror of biological warfare which smallpox became. Loewen also finds fault with the unchallenged statement that America is a land of opportunity. He points to sweatshops, labor strikes that are broken by federal troops, social classes, and income distribution that are not mentioned.

In his book Myths, Lies, and Downright Stupidity, John Stossel of 20/20 busts the myths and corrects the lies that would continue to perpetuate themselves without such heroic action. Many of these lies would remind you of the urban legends that Jim Love wrote about a decade ago. Examples of myths corrected by Stossel include: The experts on TV know which way stocks will move. All funeral directors will help you select an inexpensive funeral. Diamonds mean love. Bottled water is better. Selling body parts is immoral and should be illegal. I for one am happy to see someone attack such important misinformation.

Perhaps as surrounded as we are by lying, we are still shaky on just what it is. In his book Telling Lies, Paul Ekman says it is a deliberate choice to mislead a target without giving any notification of the intent to do so. If you make a false statement (at least one you believe is false) and you intend the hearer to believe you, you are lying.

If the books we read and the songs we hear are about lying and if we lie to everyone and they to us, and if our history books are not to be believed, then we need to know more about this form of behavior and whether it is good or bad and how to determine when we are being lied to.

We do know this for sure. We don't like being lied to by our friends, wives, doctors or business associates.

On September 9, 2009, a congressman from South Carolina shouted, “You lie” as President Obama addressed the joint legislative bodies. Since we are an “apolitical” society, I have not even bothered to check which party each man represents. So I am not certain whether this was intended to be a compliment or a slur. But since the tone of the exhortation did not sound very supportive (as in “you rock, Barack”) I can only assume that Joe Wilson intended it to be a slur and found not only the President but lying in general to be offensive.

So lying is bad. It is intrinsically wrong by its very nature, and no one wants to be known as a liar. It is bad to deceive another person. Lying breaks up homes, ruins friendships, and tears down businesses. The continued practice also corrupts the liar. It is morally and ethically wrong, and I am not going to do it anymore – except for the occasional paternalistic lie. Those are the ones where you are concerned for the person you are lying to. An example would be the answer you would give to the woman whose husband was killed this very night in a gruesome accident. You know from physical evidence that his death was slow and painful. When she asks you, “Did he suffer?” and you answer, “No, it looks like he died immediately,” that is paternalistic. This seems clear-cut, and I think most of us would engage in this type of falsehood. But what happens when she finds out you have deceived her? Her range of emotions may run toward feeling manipulated and doubting her ability to assess the truth, and she may seek revenge. Perhaps the paternalistic lie is not such a good idea. I think I will just stick with the truth.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) would agree with me. He believed that lying was always wrong. “To be truthful in all declarations is therefore a sacred unconditional command of reason, and not to be limited by any expediency.”

In fact, when I started this study a few weeks ago, I did decide to be more intentional about telling the truth. Most days I communicate with people only at home and at the pharmacy. Starting to tell Sandy the truth all the time would just be too disruptive. We have been married for 37 years and

dated about that long before she agreed to marry me. When I tell her something, she is pretty well capable of sorting fact from fiction. I think she does it on some sort of percentage basis. You know 50% true and 50% not true. If all of a sudden I told her only true stuff, then she would be discarding a lot of good information. It would be far smarter to walk the truthful path at the store. So here we go.

Monday morning at 8:00 a.m., we unlock the door and Carl Deason walks in. Carl is one of the two remaining University of Tennessee fans left in Crofton. There were three, and I am pretty sure someone got one of them. This morning I wish it had been Carl that they got. He is standing not two feet from me, asking if I went to the football game Saturday. He knows I went and knows we lost in overtime to the Vols. The only way I have ever been able to stand losing to Tennessee and Carl's predictable trips to the pharmacy is by taking advantage of his gullible nature. He will believe anything. Ordinarily at this point, I would tell Carl that he must not have heard the latest news. It was just discovered that all the Tennessee players were on steroids and never went to class, and the game had already been forfeited to the Cats. Never mind. I will take his infuriating questions and hope we win next time.

At 10:00 a.m., Bessie Gamble walks in. I don't care how many overweight people you have seen in your life, Bessie is larger than any of them. She is here to get another prescription filled for her appetite suppressants that she started last month. One of the clerks takes the prescription and chats for a bit, and then Bessie comes directly to me. I hear, "I have been on my Phentermine for a month. Can you tell the difference?" I don't want to lie. I am typing more frantically now. It's Monday morning. Why doesn't the phone ring? Bessie asks again. This is stupid. She and I have talked about her weight problem for years, and she is only asking for encouragement. I look up and tell her I can see she has lost weight. She is happy. I made it two hours but am happy I broke over. Fifteen minutes later, Bessie leaves and I dial Carl Deason's number. Telling the truth is overrated.

St. Augustine (354-430) thought that lying was always wrong, but believed some lies could be pardoned. He grouped lies into eight classes based on how difficult it was to pardon them. The least

pardonable lies were those told in teaching religion. They would be the ones that Bill and Howard would be most likely to tell. The most pardonable were those which hurt nobody and protected a person from physical "defilement." Protecting a person from physical "defilement" would seem to be one of the best things one person can do for another. St. Augustine's easily forgiven lies sound a lot like the white lies I hear so much about. A white lie is defined as a lie that is not intended to harm the person being lied to. I think in reality it is any lie that I get caught telling. You probably define your lies in a similar manner.

In a glaring omission, St. Augustine failed to mention those falsehoods told in an effort to deceive an unsuspecting person, but for only a short period of time. For years Sandy has given me 15 minutes to tell her the truth after lying like the no good dog that I am (as she puts it). If during that time I recant the original story and tell the truth, no points are lost and there is no punishment.

There are many cases where no reasonable person expects what is said to them to be genuinely truthful. So there is no deception involved, and the speaker gets a pass. Examples would include: gratitude ("That's just what I wanted.") bargaining ("My best price is \$500.00"), generalization ("It always rains here"), advertising, and sporting tips. You know that sometimes you will be the person lied to. Most of the time it is not a big deal, but sometimes you need to protect yourself.

Let's pretend that you and I are forming a business alliance. Naturally, you have checked out all facts involving the business and me. There are, however, certain aspects of the business that I must control and will be known only by me. You are therefore being put in a position of risking your time, money and perhaps reputation based on whether or not I am telling you the truth. What you need is a foolproof method of looking me in the eye and separating fact from fiction. Your position is not unlike that of Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, when he met with Adolf Hitler in 1938. As you recall, Hitler had already invaded Austria and demanded that part of Czechoslovakia be annexed to Germany. He had already secretly mobilized his army to attack Czechoslovakia but told Chamberlain

that peace could be preserved if the Czechs met his demands. Chamberlain was fooled. "In spite of the hardness and ruthlessness I thought I saw in his face, I got the impression that here was a man who could be relied upon when he had given his word." Your position is also similar to Chamberlain's in that you both want to believe what you are being told. Chamberlain desperately wanted to bring his country peace, and you may be very anxious to enter into a deal that may prove to be very lucrative. But let this be a lesson to you. Chamberlain did not bring peace in his time, and he probably looked into Hitler's eyes. If you want to be an effective lie-catcher, it will take more effort on your part.

The first thing you need to know is that if a lie fails, it is usually because some sign of emotion being concealed leaks. The stronger the emotions, the more likely the lie will be betrayed. Hitler probably was dealing with very few emotions. He would not have felt quilt about lying to a man that he probably did not like and whose country he hated. I may be as emotion free as "the Fuhrer" and just as hard to read, so what else do you need to know?

If in fact I am not being truthful with you, I might be concealing or I might be falsifying or perhaps both. So you need to examine not only what I am telling you and how that is being said, but also anything that I might be withholding. What you are looking for is "leakage" or "deception clues." Deception clues indicate a lie and leakage actually reveals the truth. A deception clue from Hitler might have told Chamberlain that Hitler was lying but leakage might have told him what his plans for conquest were. You need to do what Chamberlain didn't. Find the change in facial expression, a movement of the body, inflection of the voice, shallow breath, long pauses between words, a slip of the tongue, or a gestural slip. Of course, if I am telling you the truth, you don't need to worry about looking for any of these clues. But if I am lying, remember that I will be trying to cover them up.

The presence of any of these "tells" should give you some indication that I might be attempting to conceal an emotion. The polygraph works in a similar method. It does not detect lies, just signs of emotion. It measures changes in sweating, respiration, and blood pressure.

So before signing that contract that looks so good but could also hang you out to dry, why don't you have one more face-to-face with me, and this time use some of the tools of a real lie catcher. First of all, you are going to want to hear the whole presentation again. Yes you have heard it a dozen times already, but you should hear it again. You want it all – including dates, supplies, contracts in place, expenses, expected profits, or potential losses. This time ask questions as I give you the story. Ask not only questions that you have not previously asked, but also those that you have asked before. Do I stumble or hesitate when answering the new questions? Do I answer the questions that you have previously asked the same way as before? Watch out! Everyone forgets some small details over time, and if answers are identical, it might indicate that I am relating fictitious facts that I have committed to memory. Listen to the words. Are there Freudian slips, convoluted answers, or sophisticated evasions?

While you are listening to me, pay attention to more than the words. The voice may tell you more. The most common vocal deception clues are pauses, particularly if they are long or frequent. Speech errors may be problematic. So if I use a lot of “ah,” “um” or “uhs,” you should be suspicious. The same for repetitions such as “I, I, I mean I really...”

The sound of the voice may also be relevant. The best vocal sign of emotion is pitch. Seventy percent of the people have higher pitch when they are upset. This is particularly true with anger or fear. You would also want to watch for louder or faster speech.

What about body movements? If you noticed a slight shrug while I answered a question, that might indicate information that I am trying to conceal. The same can be said for turning the palms up, not the full gesture but only slightly. A decrease in my illustrators is also bad. Illustrators are body movements (usually the hands) that illustrate speech as it is spoken. Illustrators are used to help explain ideas that are difficult to put into words. I might also use illustrators when I can't find a word. Snapping fingers might be an example. I might decrease use of illustrators if I was having trouble deciding exactly what to say. When words are weighed carefully, there are not a lot of illustrators. Of course,

determining a decrease in my use of illustrators means you will need to observe my body movements when I am not trying to convince you to sign the contract.

My emotional arousal could also change my pattern of breathing, frequency of swallowing, and the amount of sweating. These changes would be caused by stimulation of the Autonomic Nervous System. Other effects could be blushing or blanching or pupil dilation.

Now let's look at my face. Although I might attempt to maintain a blank expression or conceal my emotions with other expressions, you may be able to detect a micro expression (a very quick but complete involuntary expression), or a squelched expression (not as complete as micro but lasts longer), or an expression generated by my reliable muscles which are usually involuntary muscles. Blinking is increased when people are emotionally aroused. As I mentioned earlier my pupils might dilate. Is my face crooked? Asymmetry or different expressions on each side of the face occurs when the expression is not truly felt. The length of time an expression lasts is important. An expression lasting more than five seconds is likely false.

If I smile, you need to know what that means. No discussion of signs of deceit would be complete without considering one of the most frequent of all facial expressions. Smiles are unique among facial expressions. It takes only one muscle to show enjoyment. Most other emotions require the actions of three to five muscles. Let's look at the false smile and compare it to the felt smile. The false smile is intended to convince another person that positive emotion is felt when it isn't. Nothing may be felt, or negative emotions may be felt that the liar tries to conceal by using the false smile as a mask. When used as a mask, the false smile will only cover the actions of the lower face and the lower eyelid. The reliable muscles that appear in the forehead cannot be masked by the false smile. These muscles signal fear or distress.

There you have it. This is everything you need to know to determine whether I am lying to you. If you happen to notice a couple of mannerisms that indicate the likelihood of a false statement here or

there, remember that this is not an exact science, and I am sure I can explain them. Don't let it worry you that I can hardly breath, hardly speak, am sweating profusely, have the voice of a soprano speaking very loudly, and my pupils look like pancakes. What are you waiting for? Sign that contract; give me your money, and let's get down to business.

Now that you can define lying and your lie catcher techniques will enable you to catch liars, it is time for some real hero worship. Almost every state has liars contests. Here is an example from West Virginia.

2007 West Virginia Liars Contest -- 3rd place, Jerry Cooperman

I'd like to thank the railroad for being here today. I didn't work on the railroad, and I didn't come here by railroad. The reason I want to thank the railroad is some history lesson back in 1863, at the foundation of our fine state.

First of all, I need to do a little map for you. Right at my fingertips, I have a map of West Virginia. Excuse me, no I don't. That's a map of Texas. Over here I have a map of West Virginia. And the part I want to talk about is the little part here at the end of my thumb, where Martinsburg, and Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan counties are located. Because of the Civil War, the reason why those three counties were included in West Virginia was because the railroad would have been running through enemy territory.

Living in Martinsburg, under other circumstances, I might have been living in Virginia had the railroad not passed through that area. In that case, I would have aspired to be part of the Virginia Liars Contest. The Virginia Liars Contest is handled a little differently than here. The entrance fee is much, much higher. It is not done on a yearly basis, but when you win, you get to live in the governor's mansion until the next contest.

In West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, we have some important credentials. First of all, it is the source of the barley, the wheat, the corn, and most of the dairy products for the entire state of West Virginia, because it's flat. It has almost all of the animals whose legs are of equal proportions.

There's a special program that's currently going on there. Between the hotel-and-motel industry, the fast-food restaurants, the banks, and the West Virginia Division of Highways, they are intending to eradicate all of the pastures, farmland, and woodlands in the Eastern Panhandle. And they're doing an excellent job of it. In 1954, there were 139,000 acres of farm ground, and in 2002, there were only 54,000. That's approximately one-third left from what there were in 1954. To me, that looks like poor judgment.

Now you all are probably familiar with poor judgment on a personal basis. Poor judgment would be thinking that the Harlem Globetrotters were bound to lose just anytime now. It would be thinking that Pete Rose was a good bet for the Baseball Hall of Fame. It would be investing in Enron stock now that the price is down.

It would be traveling along the West Virginia Turnpike and refusing to pay the \$3.75 and running out of gas. Only when you ran out of gas, you pulled off to the side of the road, you put on your four-way flashers, you went for help, you came back with the gallon of gas, only to find your battery was dead because the four-way flashers had sucked the juice out of it, and now you need a jump.

Another concept of poor judgment would be to think you're going to make big money at farming. Farming has its own elements of poor judgment. One item would be to wait until the cows came home. Another would be wearing your church clothes down into the barnyard.

The animals themselves can have poor judgment, and it can lead to difficulties. I'd like to describe to you an event where an animal had poor judgment, and it led to the animals' demise. And that would be in poetic form:

Once a faulty 'electric wire

Caused the corncrib to catch on fire;
The kernels popped and shot around,
Like winter snow across the ground;
The noise awoke the old brown mule,
Who showed poor judgment, as a rule;
Despite mild weather, she took ill,
The sign of snow caused her a chill;
Safe in her stall, they found old Rose,
That August morn the mule had froze.

The real king of liars is even closer to Kentucky. Joe Marshal won the Tennessee state contest held each year at Mule Day in Columbia, Tennessee, so many times that they made him quit competing.

During one competition, Joe talked about the Great Depression. He said his family had so little money that the only recreation he could afford was swimming in the Grace Creek. He and a bunch of the neighborhood boys would skinny dip there most every day. Finally, it became such a popular spot that the girls started swimming there too, and the boys had to keep their overalls on. Swimming in overalls was no fun, so one day the boys found another spot up the creek a bit and went skinny dipping there. To their surprise, the girls showed up. Despite threats, the girls said they were staying till the boys came out. Ferliney, who was stuck on Joe, sat down right on his clothes. The boys were getting kind of cold in the creek, so Joe was happy when he felt an old wash tub with his feet. He pulled it up, covered himself, and announced to everyone that he was coming out. When he reached his clothes, he asked, "Ferliney, do you know what I think?"

"Yes, Joe," said Ferliney, "you think there is a bottom in that washtub." Joe said as cold as that water was, it didn't make much difference.

Despite that less than impressive introduction, years later Joe and Ferliney married. Almost immediately, Ferliney began to gain weight. During the next couple of years, she became so large that she couldn't get through the front door. When she needed to go to town, Joe helped her to the basement, shoved her up the coal shoot, and loaded her on a spring wagon pulled by a mule.

Hugging Ferliney also became a problem. There was no way Joe could get his arms even halfway around her. He solved this problem by hugging as much as he could and marking his spots with chalk. He would then move to one of his chalk marks and continue the process. When he reached the second original chalk mark, he knew that he had successfully circumnavigated Ferliney and his job was done. One day Joe was hugging and was just moving to his first mark. He looked up and coming from the other direction, chalk in hand, was Bill Clinton.

Before we close, let's mention three well-known lies:

- (1) Bernie Madoff's Ponsi Scheme
- (2) Bill Clinton: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman."
- (3) "I am not a crook."

What's your favorite?