

FREE SPEECH

*POST asks four Rochesterians
to discuss a single topic: Lying*



Beginning with our predecessors having to hide behind rocks and trees to conceal themselves from predators, we have developed sophisticated ways to hide things from others ... We now know that people will confess to things they didn't do if it appears that it will benefit them at the time, even though the long-term fallout might be disastrous. In the polygraph community, we are always working to improve the technology of identifying those who attempt to conceal relevant information, and we get it right 9 out of 10 times. Lying is quite natural for intelligent evolved beings, especially once we learn as adults that being too honest can often land you in hotter water than keeping something to yourself. It's being truthful that has to be learned.
—Mike Martin, president and polygraph examiner, Global Polygraph Network

Lying about profits, delivery dates, production costs, or “fudging the numbers” for bank loans often feels like the easier and more profitable solution to business leaders, but in reality, it erodes trust with vendors, employees and customers. We promote and educate the community that integrity-based business models outpace non-ethical companies on the S&P 500 year after year. However, lying within the workplace isn't always from the top nor in a corrupt manner. Well-intentioned employees often feel they are being loyal by lying at work to protect the company rather than raising red flags or being completely transparent ... Responsibility needs to be a core value within the company's foundational brand, complete with processes on how to report fraudulent or unethical situations and ramifications for failing to report.

—Vicki M. James, board chair,
Rochester Area Business Ethics
Foundation

Most often lies are morally wrong. But that's because we use them to oppress others in service of ourselves. Here is an example. Suppose my 4-year-old daughter is sick. We take her in for tests, which reveal an advanced brain tumor. It's terminal. Her hazel eyes are piercing and her tiny hand is almost too heavy to bear. ‘I'm scared. Will I be okay, daddy? Yes, my love, of course you are. I'll take good care of you.’ I lied to her. Being honest with my little girl wouldn't have helped her. My lying provided my daughter some emotional safety and security. I did not deceive her to gain something, but to provide her with something, the emotional security a 4-year-old needs. Was it a lie? Of course. Was it wrong? Not this time.
—Jarod Sickler, philosophy Ph.D. student, University of Rochester

I think it's more fun to be dishonest because then you can actually form relationships with people. Why were you late? How about, “Well ... crippling diarrhea!” Instead of just lying or being vague and saying, ‘You know, personal issues.’ It opens up more opportunities to personalize. I prefer to explore people's conversations, like the underlying meaning in what they are saying. Think about how people lie: if you don't lie very often, people will trust what you're saying. Lying doesn't really need to serve a purpose because you don't need to lie as long as you don't back yourself into a corner. Do I lie? Well, you'll never know. I know it's cheesy to quote Modest Mouse, but there's a line, “I don't lie often, but I lie very well.”
—Jackie Evangelisti, cartoonist **LD**