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Truth Be Told . . .

Sunday, November 25, 2007; Page N06

In the arena of lie detecting, it's important to remember that no emotion tells you its source. Think of Othello suffocating Desdemona because he interpreted her tears (over Cassio's death) as the reaction of an adulterer, not a friend. Othello made an assumption and killed his wife. Oops.

The moral of the story: Just because someone exhibits the behavior of a liar does not make them one.

"There isn't a silver bullet," psychologist Paul Ekman says. "That's because we don't have Pinocchio's nose. There is nothing in demeanor that is specific to a lie."

Nevertheless, there are indicators that should prompt you to make further inquiries that may lead to discovering a lie.

Below is a template for taking the first steps, gleaned from interviews with Ekman and several other experts, as well as their works. They are psychology professors Maureen O'Sullivan (University of San Francisco), Robert Feldman ([University of Massachusetts](#)) and Bella DePaulo ([University of California at Santa Barbara](#)); communication professor Mark Frank ([University at Buffalo](#)); and body language trainer Janine Driver (a.k.a. the Lyin' Tamer).

How to Detect a Lie

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- Keenly observe the whole picture: a person's speech, body language and facial expressions, as well as the context in which these occur.

- Weigh what you observe against the person's normal (or "baseline") behavior. In what ways (and to what degree) is he or she behaving differently? Being evasive or overly polite -- behavior typical of some liars -- means nothing if the person in question is *habitually* evasive or overly polite. The key to detecting deception is spotting deviations in normal behavior, not jumping to conclusions or assuming the worst.

- Mind the micro-expressions. A constant smile and cheerful tone may mask a hidden agenda or feeling. With training and practice, you can learn to spot micro-expressions that leak through the facade and hint at a concealed emotion. Visit the Micro-Expression Training Tool online (<http://www.mettonline.com>) to take Ekman's hour-long course, which includes exercises on identifying facial expressions, for \$199.

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Six Signs of Concealed Emotion

1. Acting less positive, pleasant or cooperative.
2. Pausing frequently in speech, stumbling over words or speaking indirectly.
3. Looking or sounding tense. His or her voice may be pitched too high or too low, speech may be too fast or too slow, breathing may be shallow, and he or she may blush, blanch or sweat.

4. Telling less-compelling and less-

detailed stories, or stories whose "facts" change. You may note a lack of logical structure, or that they don't sound involved in the story. There may be a certain distance between storyteller and story.

5. Taking too much time to think about a matter that shouldn't require much thought. For example, someone stalling when asked, "Where were you last night?"

6. Trying to conceal descriptive gestures or performing such gestures when they don't make sense. For example, someone nodding while saying he or she didn't do something (as [Bill Clinton](#) did when telling [Jim Lehrer](#) in a 1998 TV interview that he didn't have an inappropriate relationship with [Monica Lewinsky](#)). Pay attention to shrugs, head nods or shakes, as well as pointing and the way someone emphasizes a word with body language.

The Lyin' Tamer's Four Tips For Getting a Liar to Confess

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1. Start with the clause "Is there any reason . . .," as in, "Is there any reason you're having trouble telling me this story and stumbling over your words?" It gives the person an opportunity to cleanly explain or trap him or herself further.
2. Answer suspicious information with a skeptical "Really?" It will get the person to provide additional (and perhaps more obviously false) information, or to simply admit to lying.
3. Stop talking. Silence makes a liar uncomfortable, and they'll often look to fill the silence with more lies or a confession.
4. Say the person's name. As in, "Mark, is there something you want to get off your chest?" Approach the situation without indignation or vitriol. A person is more apt to confess when treated with kindness rather than with angry suspicion.

-- D.Z.

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