

10 HABITS of Highly Healthy Homes



Habit 9: Speak The Truth

Sunday, July 23, 2000

Exodus 20:16 (NLT) Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

- Researchers tell us that some of the brightest minds in the world are criminal, an odd paradox that actually makes sense once you step outside of the obvious ethical issues. These are the masterminds behind complex schemes and astonishingly brazen acts of deception. They are able to carry out their crimes with such success because they have absolutely no conviction against lying.
- One such "criminal genius" is a man by the name of **Frank Abagnale**. He has appeared on every major talk show, the Focus On The Family radio show, and now works with hundreds of financial institutions, corporations and government agencies to combat cheque forgery. And he certainly has "expertise" in that area – Frank cashed \$2.5 million in fraudulent cheques in 27 countries between the ages of 16 and 21! He was finally apprehended by the French police, and served time in the French, Swedish and United States prison systems, then was released only on the condition that he would help the US government, without remuneration, write policies to curtail white-collar crime.
- But the story doesn't end there. His incredible success with forgery was only possible because Frank was able to brazenly deceive people from all walks of life. It is now more than 30 years since he first became known as "The Great Imposter." His life story was depicted in the best-selling book, "Catch Me If You Can," which is being re-released in paperback on August 1, 2000 after being out of print for many years. It is a fascinating read that documents some of the extraordinary deceptions Frank pulled off just in order to have access to money:
 - He duped the entire airline industry into thinking that he was a Pan-Am copilot, and flew all around the world for free.
 - He got certified and hired by an attorney's office in the southern United States, then passed that state's bar exam in only four months, despite never setting foot in a law classroom.
 - He taught a summer semester in sociology at a small Utah college, despite having no previous knowledge on the subject, and received such rave reviews that the college wanted to hire him fulltime.
 - He got certified and actually ran an entire shift of the Pediatric wing of a medical center near Atlanta, without taking a single course in medicine.
 - He carried out some incredible deceptions in the banking industry, made possible by the naïve trust of chequing and night deposit customers.
- Precisely because the criminal mind has no conscience about LYING, Frank is a firm believer that the only course of action open to banks, companies and governments is PREVENTION, because PUNISHMENT is so ineffective. **It is just TOO EASY to lie!**

*You are cordially invited to join us for **The Re-Wedding** next Sunday evening, July 30 at 6:30, as dozens of couples renew their marriage vows in the biggest wedding in the history of Saint John.*

Ten Habits of Highly Healthy Homes

Examine Your
Priorities

Avoid The
Counterfeits

Take God Seriously

Renew Your
Relationships

Respect Your
Heritage

Value The
Individual

Protect Your
Marriage

Maintain Your
Integrity

Speak The Truth

Discover Real
Contentment

- According to the New York Times, 91% of North Americans lie regularly. The majority of us find it hard to get through a WEEK without lying, and 20% of us can't make it through a SINGLE DAY without lying! The Washington Post reports, "People lie 92% of the time to save face and 98% of the time to keep from offending someone else." We have ALL been faced with situations when telling the truth was difficult! **Lying is often a much easier option!** Even TIME magazine did a cover story a few years back called, "Lying, Everybody's Doing It."
- Our culture's casual view of lying is perhaps most to blame for this trend. After all, our government, media, schools and most religions now promote "**situation ethics**," the teaching that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Two-thirds of us (67%) now agree with that statement, and two-thirds of us (66%) say it's not wrong to tell lies. Why would it be, if there is no such thing as "truth" anyway? Only one-third of us (31%) now agree with the statement, "Honesty is the best policy."
- Many Americans revere their first president George Washington for his impeccable honesty. After all, the story of him cutting down a cherry tree with his hatchet as a small child, and then speaking the immortal words, "I cannot tell a lie" when confronted by his father are legendary. But even that story is a lie! It was concocted by an ex-preacher named Mason Weems to humanize Washington's "boring image." He was the original "spin doctor!" (US News & World Report, March 2, 1998)
- Dr. Leonard Keeler, inventor of the Lie Detector machine, has tested 25,000 individuals and has come to the conclusion that human beings are basically deceptive. No kidding!
- People now EXPECT politicians – and anyone else in the public eye – to lie if it serves their purpose. It is a given that, if something is not a right-out lie, then it is probably a partial truth, a spin, or a distortion. And why are we so complacent with this reality? Probably because it lowers the standard against which we have to measure ourselves!
- But the Biblical standard taught by the ninth commandment is much higher – it is an absolute! **SPEAK THE TRUTH! DO NOT LIE!**
- **Proverbs 6:16-19 (NKJV)** ¹⁶ *These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:* ¹⁷ *A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,* ¹⁸ *A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,* ¹⁹ *A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*
- Did you notice that TWO of the SEVEN things God hates have to do with the Ninth Commandment against LYING? Why? Because **God is Truth**, and lying goes against the very fiber of His being!
- **Hebrews 6:18b (NLT)** *... it is impossible for God to lie.*
- **Psalm 31:5 (NKJV)** *Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*
- **John 14:6 (NLT)** *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."*
- **John 4:24** *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*
- The cesspool of evil, which has now flooded our planet, began with a lie in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent contradicted the command of God with his words, "You shall not surely die!" **WHEN WE CHOOSE TO LIE, WE ADOPT SATAN'S CHARACTER – AND ACT LIKE HIS CHILDREN!**
- **John 8:44 (NLT)** *For you are the children of your father the Devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning and has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.*
- Nothing destroys the credibility of a Christian as quickly as a lying tongue! You can't serve the God of Truth with a mouth that spews forth lies! Our society has conditioned us to minimize the seriousness of lying, and that's why it is so hard to break the behavioral pattern. **Parents!** Confront dishonesty whenever you detect it in your children – the sooner you disrupt the pattern, the easier it will be to break!
- **Ephesians 4:25 (CEV)** *We are part of the same body. Stop lying and start telling each other the truth.*
- **Colossians 3:9 (CEV)** *And stop lying to each other. You have given up your old way of life with its habits.*
- **Psalm 101:7 (NLT)** *I will not allow deceivers to serve me, and liars will not be allowed to enter my presence.*
- **DEFINITION:** Lying is simply an intention to mislead. When you tell a half-truth, you're telling a whole lie! You can lie by falsifying information, or you can lie by withholding information – and you can even lie without saying a word. The King James Version tells us not to "BEAR FALSE WITNESS" – so whenever we even "CARRY" false information, we are violating the spirit of the ninth commandment.
- **Illustration:** One teenage boy was supposed to be home by his curfew at midnight. Instead, he came in at 2:00 in the morning after everyone was asleep. As he crept up the stairs, he stepped on one that creaked loudly and woke up his dad. "Is that you, son?" his dad asked sleepily. "Yes, it's me" he replied. "What time is it?" his dad inquired. Before he could say a word, the cuckoo clock struck twice. The boy later said, "It was the most ingenious moment of his life when I stood there and cuckooed ten more times!"

WHY WE LIE

- Once you understand the motivation behind your lying, then you can deal with the real issue. LYING IS NOT YOUR REAL PROBLEM – IT’S JUST THE SYMPTOM OF A DEEPER PROBLEM. Perhaps it would be helpful to categorize lies according to the motivation behind them. St. Augustine said there are 8 different kinds of lies; Mark Twain said there were 869 different kinds of lies(!). To save a little bit of time, ☺ let’s just look at **five different kinds of lies**:

1. The Cruel Lie (Motivation: Resentment)

- This is the kind of lie you tell to get revenge on someone who has hurt you. So, to get even with them, you misrepresent or slander them with words that are intentionally destructive and malicious.
- Repeating gossip (definition: “the unnecessary bearing of information”) falls under this category. Before you ever repeat information to someone else, stop and **T.H.I.N.K.**
 - Is it**T** rue ?
 - Is it**H** elpful ?
 - Is it**I** nspiring ?
 - Is it**N** ecessary ?
 - Is it**K** ind ?
- The quickest way to determine if someone is spreading gossip is to ask them, “May I quote you on this?” Notice their sudden hesitation – because no one wants to take responsibility for a rumor! Gossips are like “verbal terrorists,” throwing their bombs into a public square and then running away, ducking accountability.
- ***Proverbs 26:20 (NLT)*** *Fire goes out for lack of fuel, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops.*
- Some people protest, “I’m not gossiping, because my information is TRUE!” But the Bible takes a different viewpoint ...
- ***Proverbs 17:9 (NLT)*** *Disregarding another person’s faults preserves love; telling about them separates close friends.*

2. The Cowardly Lie (Motivation: Fear)

- This is the kind of lie you tell to escape consequences, avoid punishment, or protect yourself. Adam told this kind of lie in the Garden of Eden when he sinned.
- Many people tell this kind of lie to cope with peer pressure of one kind or another. Also, when we say “I can’t” when what we really mean is “I don’t want to” we are telling a cowardly lie.

- The following quotes from the **Toronto News** (July 26, 1977) are actual statements from insurance forms. These drivers are trying to summarize accident details in as few words as possible, and trying to avoid admitting guilt at the same time – not an easy task!
 - Coming home I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don’t have.
 - The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intent.
 - I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way.
 - In my attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole.
 - I had been shopping for plants all day and was on my way home. As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up, obscuring my vision and I did not see the other car.
 - My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle.
 - As I approached the intersection a sign suddenly appeared in a place where no sign had ever appeared before, making me unable to avoid the accident.
 - I told the police I was not injured, but upon removing my hat, I found that I had a fractured skull.
 - A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
 - I thought my window was down, but I found out it was up when I put my head through it.
 - The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.
 - An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my car and vanished.
 - The pedestrian had no idea which way to run, so I ran over him.
 - A truck backed through my windshield into my wife’s face.
 - I had been driving for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.
 - I was on my way to the doctor with rear end trouble when my universal joint gave way causing me to have an accident.
 - I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.
- ***Proverbs 29:25 (NLT)*** *Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but to trust the Lord means safety.*

3. The Conceited Lie (Motivation: Insecurity)

- This is the kind of lie you tell to impress others, create an image, brag, or cover up low self-esteem. When you exaggerate to “prop yourself up” it comes off to others as pride and ego, but what it really is when you get behind the façade is an insecure person that doesn’t see himself as good enough.
- 40% of North Americans admit to exaggerating on their resumes for this very reason, in order to get a job or a promotion.
- We commonly exaggerate stories to make them more interesting, or statistics to make them more impressive. But God calls that lying!
- **Proverbs 10:19 (NLT)** *Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!*

4. The Calculated Lie (Motivation: Selfishness)

- This is the kind of lie you tell to manipulate others, to get your own way at any cost. People who love money (modern society calls them “con men”) do this all the time. But so do people who flatter others in an attempt to win them over.
- Sir Walter Raleigh called flatterers “the worst kind of traitors, for they strengthen our imperfections and correct us in nothing.”
- Any time you lead a person to believe something about himself that isn't true, you keep him from dealing bravely and correctly with the truth.
- **Proverbs 26:28 (CEV)** *Watch out for anyone who tells lies and flatters — they are out to get you.*
- **Romans 16:18 (NLT)** *Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people.*

5. The Convenient Lie (Motivation: Laziness)

- This is the kind of lie you tell to avoid involvement, simply because it takes time and effort to tell the truth. It is a pattern of lying that is easy to fall into in social situations, and is often called “diplomacy” – but if you tell an untruth or stretch the truth to be “tactful,” it's lying! **You never achieve a right result with a wrong action.**
- **Psalms 34:12-13 (NLT)** ¹² *Do any of you want to live a life that is long and good?* ¹³ *Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from telling lies!*

FOUR WAYS WE MUST SPEAK THE TRUTH

1. Tell the truth completely

- **Proverbs 10:10 (GN)** *Someone who holds back the truth causes trouble.*
- When you conceal the truth, you cause resentment, mistrust and superficiality in your relationships. If you don't face issues eventually in a relationship, eventually emotions will explode.
- **If you are not being honest about your feelings in your marriage you are undermining your marriage!**
- It may be unpleasant to confront at first, but if it helps the person change their character for the better, they will appreciate it in the long run.
- **Proverbs 28:23 (NLT)** *In the end, people appreciate frankness more than flattery.*

2. Tell the truth consistently

- **Ephesians 4:15 (AMP)** *Let our lives lovingly express the truth in all things – speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly.*
- Being honest 90% of the time is not integrity. It's like the boy who cried “Wolf!” – eventually you don't know whether they're telling the truth or not, so you don't believe them any of the time.
- **HONESTY MUST BE A LIFESTYLE!** Nobody has a good enough memory to be a good liar! Lying sabotages success, destroys relationships and damages character. Every relationship is built on one word – TRUST. Eventually, a dishonest person has no relationships, because no one can trust them.
- **Proverbs 11:3b (GN)** *... people who can't be trusted are destroyed by their own dishonesty.*

3. Tell the truth lovingly

- **Ephesians 4:29 (GN)** *Speak only what is helpful for building others up, according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*
- The truth is never to be used as a club to beat people with! Being honest does not mean being brutal! In the words of an old Arab proverb, **“When you shoot an arrow, dip it in honey first.”** As Paul said, we need to speak: 1) what is helpful, 2) what builds others up, 3) what meets others' needs, 4) what is beneficial.

- Think of someone you would like to help change (don't point!). If you really want to help them (not yourself!), remember two things:
 - A. People change **easier** and **faster** when you speak the truth in a spirit of love.
 - B. People always perceive truth without love as an **attack** on them, which causes them to resist it and become defensive.
- How do I know if I'm speaking the truth in a spirit of love? Ask yourself one question: **"Who am I trying to benefit?"**
- Some couples come for counseling repeatedly with the same old problems, saying "We just can't make any progress." In such cases, someone is not telling the truth completely, consistently or lovingly.
- **Couples!** Beware of absolute statements and exaggerations – they are the most problematic area of truthfulness for most people, and they always POLARIZE a conversation and PROHIBIT constructive communication. ("You never do this," "You always do that," etc.)
- **Real Communication + Real Determination = Progress**
- **Proverbs 13:17b (LB)** *Reliable communication permits progress.*

4. Tell the truth tactfully

- **Proverbs 12:18 (CEV)** *Sharp words cut like a sword, but words of wisdom heal.*
- Whenever you have to share a tough truth, the solution is never deception, it is TACT.
- The truth does set you free, but remember that you have an option with your words – you can hurt or heal, devastate or develop, tear down or build up.
- **Honesty means that everything you say must be true, not that everything true must be said.** (Were that the case, no eulogy could be given without upsetting the family!)
- Mike Murdock song: "The kindest word is an unkind word unsaid."
- **Learn how to make a point without making an enemy!** Plan your presentation. Contemplate before you communicate. Put your mind in gear before you put your mouth in motion!
- TIMING is everything in solving problems in a marriage or in a family!
- **Ecclesiastes 8:6a (GN)** *There is a right time and a right way to do everything ...*

THE CURE FOR LYING

- If you really want to change, you must realize that THE BEGINNING OF HONESTY IS THE CONFESSION OF DISHONESTY. That's the starting point – you must admit that you are a liar!
- How many lies does it take to make me a liar? ONE!
- God, help me to be more interested in character than reputation! Reputation is what others think I am; character is what I really am. Reputation is what I am when others are looking; character is what I am when no one is looking. Reputation will last for a lifetime; character will last for eternity. Reputation is what impresses people; character is what impresses God. People lie all the time to build their reputation, not realizing that they are simultaneously destroying their character!
- **Matthew 12:34 (GN)** *... for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*
- Jesus said that what's in your heart is what's going to come out of your mouth. **When it comes to lying, the heart of the issue is the issue of the heart.**
- If I'm going to be an honest person, I have to deal, not with my mouth, but with my motivation.
- If my heart is filled with resentment I will end up telling cruel lies; if my heart is filled with fear I will end up telling cowardly lies; if my heart is filled with insecurity I will end up telling conceited lies; if my heart is filled with selfishness I will end up telling calculated lies; or if my heart is filled with laziness I will end up telling convenient lies.
- **THE ONLY WAY TO STOP LYING IS TO GET A NEW HEART!**
- But the good news is that Jesus specializes in heart transplants!