



Reading *between the* Lies*

A newsletter from Paul Ekman, Ph.D | December, 2009 Volume 2, number 4

Duping Delight

By Paul Ekman, Ph.D

The Navy warrant officer John Anthony Walker, Jr. was convicted as a spy for the Soviet Union in 1987, and is serving a life sentence. The New York Times said he had been the most damaging spy in history, having helped the Soviets decipher over 200,000 encrypted naval messages. It wasn't the polygraph that caught him, nor surveillance by U.S. counter-espionage officers. His wife Barbara turned him into the FBI. He was bragging about all the money he was making, but Barbara was his ex-wife and Walker was behind in alimony payments.

What motivated this smart, devious fellow to be so foolish? Probably what I call *duping delight*, the near irresistible thrill some people feel in taking a risk and getting away with it. Sometimes it includes contempt for the target who is being so ruthlessly and successfully exploited. It is hard to contain duping delight; those who feel it want to share their accomplishments with others, seeking admiration for their exploits.

When Hitler so successfully lied to Chamberlain concealing that he had already mobilized the German army to attack Poland, he asked for a time-out from their meeting. With his generals who had been witnessing his most successful lies, Hitler went into an anteroom, where he reportedly jumped up and down with joy, and then having reduced his duping delight, he returned to the meeting.

The presence of others witnessing the successful liar typically intensifies the delight experienced and increases the chances that some of the excitement, pleasure, and contempt will leak betraying the liar. Not everyone is likely to feel duping delight; some people are terrified of being caught. More manipulative individuals are vulnerable to this emotion; the third emotion that most often betrays a lie is fear, guilt about lying.

Send in your questions about lying; we will try to answer one question in each subsequent newsletter



Dr. Ekman is the scientific adviser to a dramatic television series on FoxTV- largely based on his research. Read his blog at http://fox.com/blogs/lietome/?src=carousel_on_lietome

Paul Ekman PhD has been studying facial expression, body movement, emotion and deception for more than forty years. He is professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, San Francisco. He has authored or edited fifteen books, most recently *Emotions Revealed 2007*, and co authored with the Dalai Lama *Emotional Awareness, 2008*. Paul Ekman Group provides online training on how to recognize concealed emotions in microexpressions, classroom courses on *Evaluating Truthfulness and Emotional Skills* (www.paulekman.com). He has received honorary degrees from the University of Chicago and the University of Geneva, and the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association.

Duping delight is an especially useful emotion when detected by the lie catcher because it is not often felt by an innocent person under suspicion. As I explained in a former newsletter, such an innocent person may be afraid of being disbelieved, complicating the interpretation of fear as conclusive evidence of lying about a misdeed. And people may show guilt about some other aspect of the situation, not relevant to the misdeed in the interviewer is investigating. Recall in a former newsletter the sergeant who did not murder his neighbor's wife but was guilty about having been sexually aroused when he discovered her nude body.

Duping delight is not always a certain sign, for it can occur for reasons other than pride in having misled someone. I consulted with the police on a case in which a fourteen-year-old boy was accused of murdering his former girlfriend of twelve. He was dressed in the outfit of a member of the counter-culture, and such individuals are likely to feel superior to the police, or a television presenter, making no attempt to conceal their contempt, and pleasure in toying with anyone who is falsely accusing them of a crime.

ANSWER TO A SUBSCRIBERS QUESTION:

“Does everyone who is concealing an emotion show a micro expression, a very brief expression?”

No they do not. In our research a little more than half do show a micro. We don't yet know why some people don't. Usually they leak in some other aspect of their behavior.

* Send in your questions about lying; we will try to answer one question in each subsequent newsletter