

There are two primary reasons for widespread *compulsive lying*. It's **EASY** and it's **REWARDED**. Lying is widely perceived to be effortless, painless, and the quickest as well as best solution to all problems. The reason for this belief is **arrogance** or **ignorance**. Those who lie to you believe that you are gullible and stupid enough to believe any bullshit, or that you are too lazy or too fearful to challenge their lies. Eventually, compulsive lying is *hardwired in the liar* by the strongest reinforcement of all: **ZERO CONSEQUENCES**. Supported lying turns amateur liars into professional liars. Getting the truth from a professional liar takes hard work.

TRUE CONFESSIONS

HOW TO GET THE TRUTH: BOOK ONE

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The difference between *success* and *failure* by whatever definition you attach to either, in any profession and any organization, is the extent of honesty and dishonesty. Truth and lies are the true difference between winning and losing in any career or on any team. What is **believed** and what is **not believed** determines direction. The objective is to *believe honesty* and *disbelieve dishonesty*. Not vice-versa. However, there are two main problems with believing and disbelieving: Truth and lies have similar DNA – words, and evaluating credibility depends on word processing, that is, human opinion. Word processing is complicated and flawed. It lacks scientific precision. There are countless variables that affect what we believe and disbelieve; and whether or not we are being lied to. Without putting effort into it, *scoring a person's credibility can become guesswork*.

"Make the conscience work. **Make** it work out, **make** it work right, and **make** it do all the work."

CHAPTER 1

CASE STUDY #1

My daughter was in elementary school in a different city from where I worked as a detective. One day, she told me a story about an incident that had happened the previous day: She walked home from school for lunch. Her friends walked with her until the last 2 blocks before home. As she passed by another elementary school (that she didn't attend), alone, a man in a parked car yelled to her, "*Hey, do you know where the Centennial Pool is?*" My daughter ignored him, and ran the two blocks to our house. Inexplicably, she waited 24 hours to tell me.

My daughter described the man as about 30 years old with long dark hair and a beard. She described the car as being blue with a "shiny piece" separating the driver's door and rear passenger door, "just like Nonno's car."

Blood is not only thicker than water, it can boil faster.

Evaluating witness credibility is not easy. There is no statute in Canadian law that explains concrete guidelines about evaluating witness credibility – adults or children. Some guidelines are scattered in case law, but you have to invest the time and energy to research them. I was never trained exactly how to do it. I was never taught a concrete way of figuring out what to believe, what not to believe, and why. So I came up with my own system. After I left policing, I taught it, and got it published. But it's not scientific. Regardless, I believed my daughter, and conducted an investigation.

I went to the police station, just a few blocks from my daughter's school, to find out if there were any past similar incidents. There were. Plenty. There was a long list of unsolved incidents. I next went door-to-door, canvassing the neighbourhood around the 2 elementary schools. I heard about more incidents, many previously unreported. In cases where a vehicle was identified, by licence number or description, it was the same vehicle each time, leading me to conclude that it was the same person in all incidents; some involved the offense of Indecent Act, and some involved asking children for directions to the Centennial Pool.

The problem? Every Indecent Act offence had been committed outside the six-month time limit, and the suspect's signature line, asking for directions to the Centennial Pool, constituted no offence at that time, because the

offence of Criminal Harassment was not enacted until several years later.

Thus, there was nothing to charge the suspect with. No authority to arrest. I couldn't prove any sort of identity. And, the suspect had never been interviewed or questioned. The first complaint happened five years before my daughter's complaint, but no one had ever asked a suspect a single question. No one even tried to get the truth.

I had only one call to make. One choice. One investigative strategy.

The vehicle was registered to a woman with twin sons. I went to the home of the registered owner of the vehicle at 1:00 pm one day. The woman told me that both her twin sons were working. I wrote a note and asked her to give it to her sons. Here's what I wrote:

"Whoever scared my daughter the other day at noon, come to the police station, and tell them to call me. Signed – Detective Arcaro, victim's dad."

I got a phone call at 4:30 pm that same day from the police station telling me that a man was at the front desk with a note, asking to talk to me. When I arrived, the suspect identified himself (as one of the twins). He consented to questioning. I told him he was not under arrest, and was free to leave at any time. He was extremely cooperative. He not only consented to questioning, he was *eager* to be questioned.

I stuck to two themes:

- i. Incident narratives (from the victims' perspective). I explained the full extent of the harm done to the victims by focusing directly on what the victims experienced.
- ii. Asking for reasons. *"Why did you do it?"* not *"Did you do it?"*

There was no yelling, no threats, and no violence. I never raised my voice. There was no script; I spoke straight from the heart. He confessed in less than 15 minutes. *"Got a problem. I need help."* It was one of the quickest confessions I ever got. He admitted to all incidents over five years. Then, he voluntarily admitted himself into the psychiatric ward under the Mental Health Act.

I completed the report and, in the process, cleared over 30 occurrences. They went into the system, and got signed all the way through. The guy never re-offended. I never asked why no one bothered to question the suspect for five years.

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. *Make a call and stick to it.* Evaluate the evidence and decide on a game plan before you start the interview.
2. *Strategize & improvise.* Scripts don't work. Inflexible dialogue is disingenuous and ineffective. Make a general dialogue plan, but adapt to the specific responses or silence from the suspect.
3. *Speak straight from the heart.* True self gets a true confession.
4. *Honesty out, honest in.* No tricks, no gimmicks, and no bullshit.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Leon Festinger, a social psychologist, pioneered the theoretical concept of cognitive dissonance.¹ By definition, cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable, unpleasant inner conflict caused by an individual's *perceived* inconsistencies between personal beliefs and actions. Contradicting conduct causes cognitive dissonance. When we do anything that contradicts our personal beliefs, we start feeling like hell, and eventually burn up if nothing is done to solve it.

Here's the key point: cognitive dissonance is personal. Customized. Tailor-made. You suffer cognitive dissonance when *you* do anything that you believe is wrong. Many wrongs are no-brainers, universally accepted as wrong. Others are not. Cognitive dissonance is connected directly to your right-from-wrong belief. How much inner hell you feel depends on your definition of what the admission standards are for hell.

There are only 2 ways to deal with the psychological pain of cognitive dissonance: mask the pain with rationalization, or cure it with reconciliation. Only one results in a true confession.

Cognitive dissonance is a powerful motivator. The compulsion to confess is the truth switch. Once the switch is on, the truth pours out, resulting in the best evidence possible: a self-generated true confession. From an interviewer's point-of-view, cognitive dissonance is the biggest truth-seeking advantage. Cognitive dissonance applies legal, ethical pressure on the suspect. It starts the ball rolling toward the truth. Select your words carefully, and you will have a natural partner *inside* the suspect. Cognitive dissonance always works in the interviewer's favour.

Everyone has a conscience. No exceptions. If you're alive, you have a conscience. The myth of "no conscience" actually means weak or dys-

¹ Leon Festinger (1957). A theory of cognitive dissonance. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.

functional conscience. Strength levels vary considerably from powerful to weak; functional to dysfunctional. The good news is that any conscience can be strengthened. The bad news is that any conscience can be weakened. Like muscles, you can build up a conscience, or tear it down.

A strong conscience is your best partner. Dual meaning: The suspect's and yours. A strong conscience can't be beat, because it activates the compulsion to confess. The inner hell of guilt activates the compulsion to confess through the conscience. Inner conflict is psychological pain that needs relief. You can't hide from inner demons; they have to be released. The power of a strong conscience has limitless lifting capacity. A strong conscience can lift a weak conscience.

Appealing to the conscience is the true secret to true confessions. It is the true secret, but doing it is easier said than done. Appealing to the conscience doesn't just happen. There's no direct route. You have to find it in each and every case. Appealing to the conscience means *make the conscience functional and work*. Triple meaning: make it work out, make it work right, and make it do all the work.

Appealing to the conscience is a psychological process that involves word processing. The biggest challenge in appealing to the conscience is the mechanism of words. The only way that words get through to the conscience is by processing. However, word processing is not created equal. Every human has a unique word processor. That's why there's no fool-proof generic way that guarantees words will successfully appeal to a conscience.

Appealing to the conscience depends on the interest-rate. The difference between hiding the truth and revealing the truth is the interest rate. Deciding which direction to take at the cognitive dissonance crossroads depends on where the focus is – on self-interest or on outside-interest. High self-interest rate hides the truth. Low self-interest rate reveals the truth. Outside-interest is the investment with the highest return. The best way to appeal to any conscience is to change the interest-rate. If you change the focus, you also change the outcome. Focus on outside interest. Don't focus on negative self-interest; not yours or the suspect's.

True confessions are the best evidence in any case. A true confession proves an entire case, all of it. But, not all true confessions are automatically admissible. True confessions to persons-*not*-in-authority, for example, a friend, are automatically admissible without a voir dire: a trial within a trial that determines admissibility. True confessions to persons-*in*-authority,

for example, a police officer, are not automatically admissible – a voir dire is needed. Either way, no evidence is stronger than a true confession. No exceptions.

Acknowledging moral wrong doing causes trouble for the soul. Getting at the truth involves *soul-searching*. The most challenging search is the quest for moral character. A successful soul-searching depends on perspective of *wrong*. How *wrong* is classified determines whether truth is revealed or concealed.

A true confession heals a troubled soul. The fight for the soul is the reason why interviewing and interrogation is so difficult. Unresolved conflict, inner and outer, is the cause of all hell. The good news is that reconciliation fixes what's broken inside. It's the solution. The bad news is that reconciliation is not the obvious choice. It gets obscured in a large menu of alternatives. It often drops in the standings of priorities, sometimes to dead last. The key is to push reconciliation to the top of the list. Force a *performance demand*. A self-generated performance demand is key to making the best choice, a confession, a no-brainer.

Not trying is inexcusable. Interviewing doesn't require heavy lifting. Asking questions doesn't take back-breaking physical exertion. There are no negatives to at least trying to interview a suspect. In the preceding Case Study involving my daughter, it took five years for the suspect to be asked anything. Who knows how much could have been prevented if he had been questioned earlier. Not trying to get a true confession from a suspect is baffling.

There's no excuse for not interviewing a suspect. There's no excuse for not trying to get the truth. In the most important case of my career, one that proved to be a turning point from being a rookie detective, I didn't interview a suspect who was being investigated for putting a contract on a cop's life.

Here are the links to the inquiry of the NRP Service that resulted from the case (amongst other incidents) if you'd like to read further.

http://archive.org/stream/reportofniagarar00roya/reportofniagarar-00roya_djvu.txt

http://prod.library.utoronto.ca/datalib/data/utm/nrpf_90/05-30-90.2

http://prod.library.utoronto.ca/datalib/data/utm/nrpf_90/08-15-90.209