

Identity:
Being Honest to Oneself First...

Logic, Language, & Scientific Reasoning
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I was a pathological liar at a surprisingly young age. When my parents divorced, I learned very quickly that I could get anything by being convincing enough. And the best part? I was never caught. I'd tell mommy that dad didn't buy us nice shoes. I'd tell daddy that mom won't let me use her phone to call him. I'd tell them both that there was zero chance I'd get an Xbox for Christmas. Let's just say there was no coal in my stockings.

Draconian rules never dissuaded me. They were just a trophy of what I escaped. No better currency to a pirate than a wanted poster. Improved surveillance tactics served as a challenge. Reading my texts was like a dare to level up my craft.

What finally got to me was a lie I told to my naive little brother, and more specifically his response. I told him I vouched for him after specifically scapegoating him to escape parental persecution. And he hugged me before saying I was the person he trusted most. He was 3, I was 8.

My heart broke at the monster I was, and I came clean to my parents seconds after. They grounded me with my contingent agreement to keep things hushed with Daniel. Since then, I've become rather honest. To this day, I heavily avoid lying, and I'm known to call people out on their creative retellings. Even if they're in my favor.

The takeaway: Identity matters. Someone has to view what they are doing as wrong, and further, they have to WANT to be better. We as a class can instill ChatGPT catchers and threats of university banishment, but the most effective approach will be creating a culture that respects honesty amongst each other. I know that might not be the most helpful response, but I also know this approach rehabilitated me a decade ago. Convince us we are honest people at our identifying core. The actions will follow suit.

Disclaimer: You should also instill ChatGPT catchers and threats of university banishment. I may be optimistic, but I wasn't born yesterday. Building a culture is the equivalent of teaching a fisherman to fish. But throwing the apprentice a bone every once in a while keeps him from starving. These precautions are that bone.

I hope my points are clear despite my metaphors, allusions, and parables. They're really the only way I know how to communicate.