

Lying is a common occurrence in modern society. Individuals choose to lie for a multitude of reasons, such as to protect others, limit harm, personal gain, or simply for the thrill. As lies impact such a wide variety of topics and aspects of our lives, there may be times when we assume lying is wrong, and when it's right. To assess this issue the most common lie within society, and potentially the most extreme, will be analysed.

Behind some lies there is the intention to do good, to limit harm, or to make life easier for the recipient. In the case of Father Christmas, society tells the young to be well behaved throughout the year so they're rewarded with presents under the tree, rather than coal. In this example society lying to the young supposedly benefits both parties. With the incentive of presents, parents can manipulate their children into good behaviour, hopefully with this continuing into future years, even when the lie isn't being told. Here, a simple lie has had a domino effect, benefiting society not just when the lie was told, but well into the future. With the lie being told by multiple forms of media without challenge, it's plausible that society is in favour of lies that appear harmless to the recipient, but also benefit society. However, lying is a flawed way of society gaining control; if with any example of a lie, the recipient was to discover that they had been lied to (which can be inevitable, as with the existence of Father Christmas), they may question their response to the lie. If they have only been well behaved for Father Christmas for example, they may stop behaving in such a way, as good behaviour will become associated with the lie and the humiliation they felt having realised they'd been lied to. In a modern world where we value honesty and openness more than ever, lying to manipulate people's behaviour should be wrong, especially if someone is so easily manipulated as to believe the lie.

With any lie, it's also difficult to judge the impact on the victim, as everyone is unique. Eventually with the lie regarding Father Christmas, the child will learn the truth, that society has lied to them and he isn't real. Parents and society in general may assume that this lie is appropriate as it has been told for years, and all children will eventually come to learn the truth. However, nobody can predict the wider outreaches of the lie, and just because something is a tradition or has been condoned in the past, doesn't mean it has a place in today's world; one child may refuse to accept the truth about Father Christmas and be ridiculed by their friends, or begin to question other aspects of their childhood, that like Father Christmas they assumed real. Therefore, a lie made with good intentions could potentially do more harm than good. The issues continue as if the parents of the child weren't able to afford presents from 'Father Christmas', the child would understandably be upset. In this case, even if the family of the child didn't tell the lie about Father Christmas, the child would probably still be influenced by the media. Thus, lying appears wrong as we can't possibly control how far lies spread, or the impact on others, even if we ourselves think the lie is appropriate.

Another example of lying can simply be withholding the truth. If we continue with the example of extreme lies, then the idea of the government not telling the people of Earth that the world is about to end, also illustrates how lying is fundamentally wrong. Initially the withholding of information may seem like the correct choice, as the opposite would lead to mass hysteria, violence and carnage. Instead the population will continue to live as normal, the emotional distress of the world ending event being momentary rather than cruelly prolonged as we wait in suspense for it to happen. In theory, it's for the 'greater good' of everybody not to give out such information however, the concept of the 'greater good' in terms of lying is wrong. With this example, not giving out this information could potentially mean a mother on a business trip never sees her child again before

their death, the end of the world made worse by this, the lie easily not achieving its aim of limiting suffering. Here, it's impossible to tell whether the hurt felt by the mother realising she hasn't seen her child before the world's end, or the hurt of knowing the world is about to end, is greater. Therefore, it's plausible to think that lying to protect others is wrong, as we can't predict the emotions of others, and in a world where we all strive to be equals, we shouldn't just burden a select few with information that has a catastrophic event on others.

Ultimately, to determine whether lying is right or wrong, we must decide if the positives of lying outweigh the negatives. Although lying can be for the greater good, or appear harmless, the examples above prove that even when lies intend to do no harm, upset can't be avoided due to how we interpret lies being very personal. Due to this evidence it can be presumed that lies given with even the best of intentions, can't escape the fact that lying is fundamentally wrong.