

Civic Minds

Date: Friday, October 21, 2016

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Article Title: **Small lies tend to adapt brain to bigger ones, study suggests**

Section: Main, A1

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Students will examine dishonesty in their own lives and the role it plays in our larger community.

CCSS Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.b

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Social Studies EALR 1: CIVICS The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

Understands that citizenship and civic involvement in the neighborhood and community are the rights and responsibilities of individuals.

- Explains that citizens have the right to live in a safe community.
- Explains that citizens have the responsibility to obey the laws of the community.
- Explains that citizens have the responsibility to take care of the environment in the community.

Vocabulary

Look up the definition of ***propensity***. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

For example, Shenhav said, it could be that the act of lying by itself increased the ***propensity*** for acting dishonestly, "like gradually pushing our foot off a brake." Or that the subjects, who were not punished in any way for their dishonesty, concluded that lying in that environment was not so bad.

Comprehension Questions

1. People who tell small, self-serving lies are likely to progress to what?
2. How does the human brain adapt to lies?
3. The finding, the researchers said, provides evidence for the “_____” sometimes described by wayward politicians, corrupt financiers, unfaithful spouses and others in explaining their misconduct.
4. How do these lies generally begin?
5. Dishonesty has been difficult to study. Using brain scanners in a lab, researchers have sometimes instructed subjects to lie in order to see what their brains were doing. Sharot and her colleagues devised a situation that offered participants the chance to lie of their own free will, and gave them an incentive to do so. How did that study go? What part of the brain were researchers activating? What did the findings suggest?
6. For example, Shenhav said, it could be that the act of lying by itself increased what?

Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts

- ***What are little white lies? Why do you think they're called that?***
- ***Do you notice when you find yourself telling “little white lies?”***
- ***Could you see how telling lies and being dishonest could be a slippery slope? How?***
- ***How can little lies lead to bigger lies?***

A functional MRI scanning device monitored brain activity, with the researchers concentrating on the amygdala, an area associated with emotional response.

Participants in the study were asked to advise a partner in another room about how many pennies were in a jar. When the subjects believed that lying about the amount of money was to their benefit, they were more inclined to dishonesty and their lies escalated over time. As lying increased, the response in the amygdala decreased. And the size of the decline from one trial to another predicted how much bigger a subject's next lie would be.

These findings suggested that the negative emotional signals initially associated with lying decrease as the brain becomes desensitized, Sharot said.

- Go online and find a picture of the amygdala. What does it regulate?
- As lying increased, the response in the amygdala decreased. These findings suggested that the negative emotional signals initially associated with lying decrease as the brain becomes desensitized, Sharot said.
- What does desensitized mean? Have you ever felt desensitized to something?
- How can this feeling effect people's thoughts and behavior?

What did you think about the research study about dishonesty that was conducted?

“The implication is that we should watch out that we don't tolerate lies, in order to prevent people from lying when it really matters.”

- Do you agree or disagree with the statement above? Why?

Essay

How do you feel about people who lie or are dishonest?

How do you feel when you're being dishonest?

How important is honesty at school, in relationships, at work, being a citizen in our community, et cetera?

How can your dishonest behavior affect others?

What might stop people from escalating their dishonesty? How can someone break that cycle? How can we prevent this behavior?

Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy

How the United States government interacts with the world affects people across the globe. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of US foreign policy on people in the United States and across the world.

- Using The Seattle Times print replica, find an article from this week that deals with world politics or foreign policy.
- What are the main points of view from someone living in that particular country? How is that "view" similar and different than your own opinion, regarding the specific issue the article is discussing?
- Why is it important to study and learn about foreign policy? How does it help you understand the world we live in, using current issues and events?

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