

- Your friend, who is headed out the door for an important job interview, says, "I know I'll never get this job! I'm really not qualified, and besides I look terrible." You agree with your friend's assessment.
- You've just been given a large, extremely ugly lamp as a gift by a relative who visits your home often. How would you respond to the question, "Where will you put it?"

Although honesty is desirable in principle, it often has risky, potentially unpleasant consequences. It's tempting to sidestep situations where self-disclosure would be difficult, but examples like the ones you just read show that avoidance isn't always possible. Research and personal experience show that communicators—even those with the best intentions—aren't always completely honest when they find themselves in situations when honesty would be uncomfortable (Ennis et al., 2008; Scott, 2010). Four common alternatives to self-disclosure are silence, lying, equivocation, and hinting. We will take a closer look at each one.

Silence One alternative to self-disclosure is to keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself. As the cartoon on this page shows, there are many times when keeping information to yourself can seem like the best approach, both for you and the other person. One study showed that in the workplace, withholding information is often seen as a better alternative than lying or engaging in deception (Dunleavy et al., 2010).

You can get a sense of how much you rely on silence instead of disclosing by keeping a record of when you do and don't express your opinions. You're likely to find that withholding thoughts and feelings is a common approach for you.

Lying A lie is a deliberate attempt to hide or misrepresent the truth. Lying to gain unfair advantage over an unknowing victim seems clearly wrong, but another kind of mistruth—the "benevolent lie"—isn't so easy to dismiss as completely unethical. Benevolent lies are defined (at least by the people who tell them) as not being malicious—and perhaps they are even helpful to the person to whom they are told. You can almost certainly recall times when you have been less than truthful in order to avoid hurting someone you care for.

Whether or not they are innocent, benevolent lies are certainly common. In several studies spanning four decades, a significant majority of people surveyed acknowledge that even in their closest relationships, there are times when lying is justified (DePaulo et al., 2009; Knapp, 2006). In one study, 130 subjects were asked to keep track of the truthfulness of their everyday conversational statements (Turner et al., 1975). Only 38.5 percent of these statements—slightly more than a

