

# The Lies We Tell Ourselves - Part 1

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My grandpa used to tell me that you could understand a person completely only when you understood the lies they told themselves. Most of us don't realize we lie to ourselves all of the time. The lies are not done deliberately. They are done subconsciously. They are intended to make the world easier for us to understand, easier for us to cope with, and easier to explain away what we cannot accept or understand.

An example of a lie people often tell themselves is: "The world just doesn't get my genius." The truth could be that you are a genius and the world really doesn't understand you. The odds, however, suggest you are not one of the smartest people in the world, and that reality may be very hard for you to accept. Think of it this way: the vast majority of people rate themselves as better than average drivers, better than average in looks, and better than average in bed, yet that is impossible. The vast majority of people can't exceed the average.

I suspect lying to ourselves serves a constructive psychological function, because it keeps us going when we most need it. We construct an interpretation of the world that says we are doing well and we can succeed, and that is what gets us through the tough times. Perhaps that makes it a necessary part of the human mind—a coping measure when we most need it.

The challenge is when the lying gets out of hand and it becomes a compulsion, a drug that feeds our ego without growing our skills or knowledge. That is when the lies become dangerous. They are becoming dangerous now on a social scale, as more and more people begin to express their opinion as fact. It is commonly said that you are entitled to your own opinion but you are not entitled to your own facts, except that people are beginning to feel entitled to their own facts.

Folks claim that vaccines are dangerous and harmful even when the only person who made such a claim had his medical licence revoked and all of his claims debunked by real science. So what do they do, those who still wish to believe he was right? They make up new facts (lies): my children are living healthier; vaccines don't work anyway; my choice to not vaccinate only impacts my child. They will call those opinions facts, but they are not facts. They are lies.

When challenged, they may admit they are not facts, but they will then argue they are personal opinions and entitled to them. That is where it gets dangerous. Opinions are also only valid when supported by the facts. Gravity's existence is a fact. Your opinion that it doesn't exist would be wrong. Yes, you are entitled to be wrong, but not if your opinion becomes dangerous to others. For the vaccine deniers, the fact is that their kids won't get to live healthier lives if they get polio or some other disease. The fact is vaccines are proven through scientific rigor to work effectively, which is why diseases like polio have almost been eradicated—at least, until these folks stopped getting vaccinated. The fact is that the herd theory of vaccination means not vaccinating your kids can harm other children. Those are facts.

I don't mean to pick on vaccine deniers, but they are a perfect example of a potentially very dangerous social problem. We used to lie to ourselves. Now we lie out loud and want our lies to be accepted and acknowledged by society as legitimate, when clearly they are not. For instance, many people still claim crime is on the rise, even though crime rates have been proven to be in decline all across North America.

If we accept those fearful opinions which are not supported by facts, we run the risk of chasing ghosts. We create policy, spend money and target problems that really don't exist. That is dangerous.

Our team specializes in helping communities find paths to success. That means we must help communities get off the path of failure. Transitioning from one path to another, however, is very difficult for many communities because of the lies they tell themselves. That's right. Communities lie to themselves too, and it leads to their failure. The second part of this article will be about the lies communities tell themselves, and the impact those lies have on their future.

*This syndicated content is provided by Doug Griffiths, best-selling author and chief community builder at 13 Ways, a company with a mission to push communities to face their challenges to find their unique path to success. For more information visit [www.13ways.ca](http://www.13ways.ca), or we can start the conversation at [info@13ways.ca](mailto:info@13ways.ca).*