

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!

The invisible price tag of lies

Imagine your relationship as a shared bank account of trust, with deposits made through honesty and vulnerability. Each lie, even the seemingly little white ones, withdraws from the account. Though they may initially go unnoticed, eventually the balance drops, triggering overdraft fees: questioning, doubt, and emotional distance. The real cost of dishonesty in intimate relationships is not just the immediate deception, but the long-term insolvency that follows when the account runs dry. Here are the five deep costs of lies in relationships.

- 1. Trust Inflation:** Each lie increases the “price” of future trust. Once a lie has been uncovered, everything becomes more expensive. Statements that went unquestioned now require verification. “I’m working late, I’m out with friends, it was just one, I’m fine” may be scrutinised. The relationship economy suffers as emotional exchanges require more collateral.
- 2. The Doubt Tax:** Even though the lie might be cleared up and resolved, your partner continues to pay the doubt tax through intrusive recurring thoughts. “What else might not be true?” “How can I know what to believe?” Perhaps this is the cruelest cost overall as it is invisible and compounds over time, draining the relationship of its emotional security.
- 3. Intimacy Bankruptcy:** Lies create distance, and distance leads to disconnection. Despite what people may say, when tuned into our bodies, feelings, and intuition, we sense when something is off. Lies put walls between people. This is how we can become emotional islands, even with the person we sleep next to.
- 4. The Memory Mortgage:** Once dishonesty enters a relationship, both partners take on a hefty cognitive mortgage. The liar must remember which version of reality they have presented, constantly maintaining their story to avoid contradictions. Meanwhile, the partner begins unconsciously archiving statements, later searching their mental database for inconsistencies. Both parties exhaust themselves paying for this mortgage of hypervigilance.



Don't let fibs torch your pants and lose your sweetheart

- 5. Authenticity Deficit:** Not only do you separate from your partner, but you separate from your true self. Living authentically becomes increasingly difficult and stressful trying to hold multiple realities. It is near impossible to experience inner peace and freedom once you have begun to weave a web. The ultimate cost of deception is that you sacrifice true connection, love, and intimacy.

So, why do people lie? There are many reasons, but some include fear of conflict, not wanting to hurt others or to present ourselves in a better light. Sometimes we will be legally or professionally bound. Honesty, dishonesty, transparency, and lack of it all exist on a spectrum including non-disclosure, omission, redaction, and editing. However, the irony of deception meant to protect, is that it can ultimately become the relationship's biggest threat.

Spitting out aggressive truths in the heat of the moment isn't the way either. Honesty requires safety. If a person doesn't feel safe with you, it will be hard for them to be honest. It's that simple. As a listener, if you can offer the conditions of empathy, compassion, and non-judgment, you will create an environment that is conducive to honesty. If you offer reactivity, heightened emotion, anger, judgment, or shame, you decrease your chances of getting the truth. The math is simple: honesty may sometimes be uncomfortable, but dishonesty is ultimately unbearable.

Words: **Scout Smith-O'Leary**, The Love Scout
If you and your partner need to level up your communication, honesty, and transparency game, reach out to The Love Scout to book a session. Based in Manly. Telehealth available.
Visit thelovescout.com or call **0410 030 463**.

A 'living museum' at Long Reef Aquatic Reserve

Walking along Long Reef Headland is an experience in itself, with sweeping ocean views stretching north and south, but even more remarkable is the 80 hectares below – often described as a ‘living museum’ – teeming with unique marine life and geological features.

This ‘living museum’, a term first used by Newport's Isobel Bennetter – one of Australia's pioneering marine biologists – refers to Long Reef Aquatic Reserve. Established in 1980, this is the oldest aquatic reserve in New South Wales. According to reports, in the 1970s, the reserve had become “seriously depleted due to the intensive collection of food and bait.” But a wave of support to protect the area's marine life soon took hold, and for over 40 years the reserve has remained a sanctuary.

As we wandered down the steep steps at the eastern edge of the headland, a light dusting of clouds drifted across an otherwise bright blue sky. The sunlight cast down on the reserve, revealing the array of colours that made the tidal platforms look like a painted picture. We watched as two surfers headed into the ocean from the north side of the reef, joining two foilers enjoying the quiet, uninterrupted waves. Further out on the tidal platform, families and young children played in the shallow water, splashing in rock pools, and searching for marine life.

A few people, us included, stood with cameras in hand, watching the myriad birds hovering in the wind or diving to catch prey. A bird of prey plunged into the water to bathe, splashing around before soaring high above the headland to dry off. It's a reserve teeming with activity, above and below the tideline.

In a video describing a day at the reef for the NSW Government, Daniel Mallen, Senior Education Officer at DPI Fisheries, says, “people can see a huge range of sea creatures, from nudibranchs and bubble shells to turban snails, octopuses, a whole range of birdlife, and all the trace fossils that can be found along the shelf out here.”

The geographical features of the area – high and low tides, rock pools, surf-exposed ledges, sheltered rock pools, rocky reefs, and boulder fields – facilitate the breeding of this diverse range of animals. It's also what makes it a hotspot for marine biologists to study. Over



The 80 hectare sanctuary teeming with marine life

4,000 school children visit every year to study everything from biology and geography to biodiversity, erosion and weathering, and the human impact on the coastline.

Even as we stand here, the landscape continues to shift around us. A heron perches on a rock while more birds join the bird of prey, hovering high in the sky. It's incredible to watch, and just as astonishing to think about all that's unfolding beneath the surface in this living museum.

Did you know...

Despite the headland's prominence, no lighthouse was ever built. As a result, approximately 25 shipwrecks have been linked to Long Reef. Some, however, were intentional, sunk to create artificial reefs, including the Manly ferries Dee Why and Bellubera.

How to get here

Turn onto Anzac Avenue from Pittwater Road and either park on Anzac Avenue or in the council car park next to the Long Reef Golf Club. From here, you can either walk along the headland to the top, where steps at the eastern side lead you down to the reserve, or start at the northern end of the reserve, walking along Fisherman's Beach and around the base of the headland on the rocky platforms.

Words: **Rebecca Burton**

Due to the reserve's protected status, leave your dogs and cats at home for this adventure!