

# The Spectrum of Honesty

Understanding the nuance of being honest in the real world

“That outfit is really not flattering” said no husband ever. On the one hand, we are raised to believe that honesty is an admirable quality and something we should strive towards. On the other, we can be reprimanded or punished for sharing what’s on our mind. Moving through life, it can be hard to know how honest to be, with who and what repercussion or consequence we will face.

The first thing to note is that honesty exists on a spectrum. Every time you speak, you will be choosing (consciously or subconsciously) to do so with a level of discretion or clarity. There are six basic markers on the spectrum that can help us identify the extent to which we are being honest and transparent.

1. **Brutal honesty** – unfiltered expression (often emotionally charged) with little to no regard for the other person’s well-being or consequence
2. **Considered honesty** – thinking about what is relevant, necessary, intentional, aligned with your values, boundaries, respectful of privacy/confidentiality and considerate of other’s well-being
3. **Omission** – intentionally censoring things out
4. **Editing** – being selective in what you share to project yourself or others in a certain way
5. **Deception** – intentionally causing someone to believe something is true or not true
6. **Lying** – blatantly saying things that are not true

Have you ever had a fight with a partner because you felt that they weren’t being fully honest with you? It’s easy to forget that about 80% of communication is non-verbal and we notice microscopic changes in tone, intonation, facial expression, body language and eye contact. Being aware that your partner is looking, speaking, or acting differently can be concerning. Sometimes this is a reflection of a person not feeling safe to communicate or not being transparent.

The second thing to note is safety; people need to feel safe with whoever they are talking to. If a person fears judgment, criticism or rejection, the likelihood of them being honest and transparent is low. When we fear, we enter a state of survival. Our need to maintain the relationship will often be greater than our need or ability to be honest in it. If you want honesty, you must cultivate the conditions for it: acceptance, non-judgment,



Wooden it be nice to nose when you’re being lied to

care, interest, and presence.

Thirdly, uncontained, and emotionally charged lashing-outs cannot be tarred under the brush of functional honest communication. The “truth” doesn’t rationalize or justify your immature and dysfunctional output. Furthermore, it will likely hurt the receiver and damage the relationship. This is a pitfall of so many couples; they bottle, bottle, bottle then blow. Yes, there is some relief in “getting things off their chest”, but they do so in a way that makes the other feel scared, inferior, unimportant, worthless, judged or shamed. It takes a lot of time, trust, and effort to repair these emotional ruptures.

Lastly, white lies; a harmless non-truth designed to not hurt someone else’s feelings. Is it the kind or co-dependent nature within us that drives us to say these things? Can you restructure your white lies to say something honest? If not, can you pause, hold an internal boundary and refrain from saying anything?

Your highest relational game will require you to take time and consider each conversational move. The big question moving forward is how do you communicate in a way that reflects your values of honesty and integrity with composure, regulation, and functionality in order to maintain closeness with others but withhold your sense of authenticity?

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# Weed better talk about this

They might reside in your garden, but they could invade the nation

For most of my life I thought “weed” was either something you smoked or the name for a scrawny little runt (like me). If you’d said I would develop a malevolent dislike for the plural of “weed”, I would have thought you were off your trolley, nuts, absolutely stark raving, stonking mad. But then I went “troppo”, ended up living on the Northern Beaches, and discovered the harm these pernicious things actually do.

To be fair, I was raised in England, where the weeds were wimpy and there was not much authentic nature left. I’ve since learned that around 80% of the UK’s flora is not endemic. Fast-forward to the burgeoning metropolis of Sydney, which is still blessed to have pockets of original, native vegetation interspersed with suburbia.

Here you’ll find plant species that have survived from the time of the Gondwanan super-continent and have evolved to cope with extreme weather, poor soils and fire. You’ll also find lots of weeds. These are not “weedy” weeds though...they’re super-sized marauders on a testosterone fuelled rampage. And, like a lot that’s amiss on this wonderful continent, the thoughtless, colonialists (and their progeny) are to blame.

It all started with the first British settlers wanting to plant reminders of “home” at every opportunity and it continues to this day, with the horticultural industry still bringing in new varieties from overseas. Every one is a potential environmental weed.

Weed management costs the Australian economy around \$4 billion annually. They represent the second greatest threat to biodiversity – after land clearing – and almost half of Australia’s 220 declared noxious weeds were introduced deliberately (often as garden ornamentals). People still prefer to plant “exotics” rather than their own local native species and chances are these will encroach into bushland and overwhelm the original flora, especially when boosted by garden fertilizers and urban run-off.

The upshot is that Sydney bushland, far from being the richly diverse “larder” that sustained



Weeds smothering coastal bushland

indigenous peoples for millennia, is fast disappearing before our very eyes. Few people seem inclined to grow endemic native plants or are bothered to remove weed species (apart from isolated “Bushcare” groups).

Often the only interaction between residents and bushland is the practice of poisoning surviving Eucalyptus trees to enhance views. As a consequence, the birds, animals and insects that rely on native plants for their food source are vanishing too.

According to the Australian Conservation Foundation, people today recognise less than 10 plant species, but more than a thousand corporate logos.

These are five of the most prominent rogue species on Sydney’s Northern Beaches. If they exist in your garden, please get rid!

**Asparagus Fern:** from South Africa and like many other weeds, its seeds are spread by birds that eat the red berries. **Lantana:** a native of Central and South America, it was brought to Australia in around 1840 as a garden ornamental and now invades around 4 million hectares.

**Morning Glory:** a native of China, this is another ostensibly “pretty” garden plant but once it gets into the bush it can be a nightmare to remove. **Senna/Cassia:** another nasty piece of work from South America, imported here as a garden plant. It is very invasive and thrives in all conditions. **Privet:** their black fruits are greedily consumed by birds which collaborate in spreading this pest deep into fragile bushland where it grows rampantly.

To volunteer as a Bush Carer visit [northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/environment/bushland/bushcare-volunteers](http://northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/environment/bushland/bushcare-volunteers)

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