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My View: Little white lies are usually harmless and often pretty funny

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Today I'm weighing in on some white lies we all use frequently. A close friend of mine used to have a wonderful expression whenever somebody was guilty of a harmless exaggeration: "Who's it hurting?"

That got me thinking about the little lies we tell every day. Not the consequential lies that destroy relationships, businesses or reputations. I'm talking about the mostly harmless ones that grease the wheels of everyday life and, if we're willing to admit it, make us laugh at ourselves.



Joe Kreuz thinks some lies are more laughable than dishonest.

"I'm five minutes away." "I'm leaving right now." "Traffic was terrible." Three classics, usually delivered while you're still looking for your keys. And when my mom called the Creekview looking for my dad: “Tell her I just left.”

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Technology has given us an entirely new category. "I never got your text." "I sent that yesterday." "Your email must have gone to spam." "I might lose you. I'm getting on the elevator." Before cellphones, we had to invent better excuses.

Then there are the promises we make to ourselves. "I'm starting my diet Monday." "I've been working out." "I only had two drinks." "This is my last one." "The doctor says I'm in great shape."

Marriage has its own diplomatic language. "Of course I was listening." "I don't mind waiting." "I'm almost ready." "No, that outfit doesn't make you look fat." Some lies are survival skills.

Parents have their own honor system. "He's not on his phone." "She already ate her vegetables." "We limit screen time." "He's a great sleeper." "We don't do sugar on school nights." And the one every grandparent recognizes on sight: "This is the first time she's ever acted like this."

Business may be the undisputed champion. "The check is in the mail." "It's waiting for the boss's signature." "We're very close to making a decision." "Money isn't the issue." "I'm not looking for another job." "I love my boss."

Social media has created another wonderful collection, with the biggest one: "I'm getting off social media."

Then there's golf, where otherwise honorable men suddenly develop creative accounting skills. "I shot an 82." "That was a mulligan." "I never touched the ball." "I found it just inside the three-minute limit." "I never take a breakfast ball." And the timeless request

heard on courses everywhere: "Put me down for a five.

We lie about money, too. "I got it on sale." "It was practically free." "I've had this forever." "I gave you a fifty." Somewhere between the cash register and home, the actual purchase price frequently undergoes a mysterious adjustment.

Age brings a few new favorites. "I was just resting my eyes." "Of course I remember his name." Then you spend the next ten minutes desperately hoping somebody else says the name.

And we all know the person who announces, "I'll keep this brief" and then speaks for 25 minutes. Or, "Just one quick question," followed by a three-part question requiring a PowerPoint presentation to answer.

The funny thing is that beneath all these little fibs is something wonderfully human. We exaggerate. We procrastinate. We save face. We occasionally shave a stroke off our memories, if not our scorecards.

Are they lies? Technically, some probably are.

But as my friend used to ask: Who's it hurting?