

Growing up, my sister was one of the scariest people I knew. She has this thing about trust and about lies. The former, she taught me, was only wholly given once and the latter, well, let's put it this way—her favorite phrase was, “We don't lie in this family.”

Welp.

This meant that the act of creating lies and expelling them from my mouth—though easy enough—felt so *tremendously wrong*.

Now that I'm an *adult*, I find honesty, and the value we place on it, really fascinating. Because, for many of us, we feel we're somehow owed maximal honesty in our relationships, friendly or romantic. Think about it—someone we care about does something stupid or accidental or just plain thoughtless and the script demands that we say something along the lines of “what bothers me isn't what you did, it's that you didn't tell me.” It's the betrayal that infuriates us, because we don't perform honesty as a kindness—it's a duty. Keep in mind, this interaction can, and often does, happen in completely platonic and friendly relationships; relationships that are entirely voluntary and that can be dissolved, theoretically, at any time.

Or, in a different vein, think about when something noteworthy happens in a friend's life and they don't tell you—or, worse, they tell other people and you find out. Personally, my reaction is swift and visceral: there must be something wrong with the relationship, why didn't they want to tell me, *don't they trust me?* And there it is, intertwined with these expectations of truth: the need for “complete” trust.

But can we always handle the truth?

It's hard enough when the world doesn't hesitate to tell us things we know are true but don't like to remember—that there are people out there who are more interesting, successful, witty, etc, than we can ever dream...why would we need that from loved ones? Because we all have those moments when we think something heinous about a friend but we hold our tongues and “mmm” or “uh huh” our way through that conversation about their dog's cuticles. Isn't that kindness a greater service to them and a stronger manifestation of our respect?

Buried somewhere in these demands for honesty is the foggy concept that, if we are good enough friends, you should be able to tell me your every thought; you should be completely transparent—a book I can read. But we were all born with a perfectly contained and singular consciousness; perhaps Mother Nature knew best when she designed us to be able to conceal our thoughts and to work through them on our own. Would it be wise to share those dark, demented, and fleeting thoughts we have at 4 in the morning when we can't sleep? Do even our closest friends need to know how deep we can sink, the topography of the self-loathing that can strike at a moment and be gone the next? Sometimes, we can have repulsive thoughts, truly unacceptable imaginings of the world and those around us. If we spoke them into existence, how

would we handle the fallout of a friend's changed perception of us? Is all that mess worth it?

I really doubt it.

Of course, this all applies—maybe especially so—to romantic relationships, where these expectations and demands are often only intensified. Society (read: romantic comedies) has taught me that when I find the One Person I Was Put On This Planet To Find, I will not only be unlike anyone he has ever met, but he will become a completely different and devoted person Because Of Me and, most importantly, we will know everything about each other and share an Unshakeable Trust.

But how in the hell do you survive a lifetime together without some colossal white lies?

I have to believe that most well-adjusted people do not actually expect the romance I described above but I suspect that the related myth of complete honesty and trust is a little harder to disarm. We all know that to love someone is to love them despite (or because of) their flaws. That said, recognizing a partner's flaws and pointing them out whenever you feel the need to "be honest" are two distinct things; who does the latter serve? It may not be the "truth" but we all hold fast to our delusions: that we are good, that we are loved, that we are powerful, that we will change the world. Some are true, some are not—either way, it's how many of us sleep at night.

I, for one, think it's a higher act of love to protect the people we care about...even if it's from ourselves.