
COLLECTION

The Essentials of Applied Psychology

Why Do Men Lie?



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Introduction — This Book Is Not Against Men

Let's start here, because the title of this book can be misleading.

"Why Do Men Lie?" — the question, as posed, might suggest I'm about to offer you a catalogue of grievances, a misandrist argument, or worse still: a theoretical justification for your resentment. That is not what you are about to read. If you're looking for a book that will tell you "all men are liars" and encourage you to cultivate your mistrust, I can only suggest you set it down now — books like that exist, you'll find them easily enough, and they will not help you.

This book was written for a specific reason: in my practice as a CBT Psychopractitioner in Nantes, I have spent years seeing women who all share the same unease. They typically arrive after having tried to "reason" their way through their doubt. They told themselves they were imagining things. They asked their friends, their mothers, sometimes a first therapist, who responded with one or the other of two equally destructive phrases: "you're making things up," or "if he's behaving like that, he's already been unfaithful."

Neither phrase was of any use to them. The first deepened their isolation. The second threw them into an obsessive investigation that finished off whatever remained of their relationship. And every single one of them arrived in my office with the same words, sometimes barely whispered: "I just need to understand what's happening to me."

To understand. Not to accuse. Not to take revenge. And not to deflect responsibility either.

This book is written in service of that understanding.

What Your Doubt Reveals — and What It Does Not

When a woman comes to see me because she suspects her partner of lying, I do not know at the outset whether she is right or wrong. That is not my role. What concerns me is what her doubt is doing to her — to her sleep, her concentration, her self-esteem, her body that tenses every time the other person's phone vibrates.

Because there is one thing too few people say: chronic relational doubt is a clinical form of suffering in its own right, independent of the actual facts. Even if your partner is entirely honest with you, the mere experience of living in permanent doubt exhausts you in exactly the same way as if he were truly lying. Your brain does not distinguish between a justified alert and an inherited one — it activates the same threat system, floods you with the same cortisol, mobilises the same hypervigilance.

This is why the first thing to do with your doubt is not to resolve it through investigation. It is to understand it. To know where it comes from, what it contains, and what place to give it.

This book offers a framework built on three layers.

The first layer is collective. You are not the only woman to feel this unease, and this impression shared by so many women is not an invention. Research in social psychology has documented an asymmetrical reality: men lie, on average, slightly more than women in intimate relationships; a minority of them (around 5%) accounts for the bulk of these lies; and — perhaps more importantly — women decode the micro-signals of concealment with greater accuracy. If your partner is lying to you, your nervous system probably knows before you do. If he is not lying to you, your nervous system can also be mistaken — and the primary goal of this book is to give you the means to distinguish between these two situations.

The second layer is personal. If you have ever been betrayed — in a previous relationship, by an absent or manipulative parent, by a close friendship, by a boss, by anyone who mattered to you — your brain has learned. It has installed what researchers in relational trauma call a post-traumatic radar: an early-warning system that triggers whenever it perceives elements that resemble, even remotely, what it once experienced. This radar is a survival skill, not paranoia. But like any alarm system, it can over-detect. It can cause you to see in your current partner the shadow of a previous one, and turn every delay, every silence, every small inconsistency into confirmation of a scenario that was, in reality, written by someone else entirely.

Learning to distinguish between your history and your present is one of the most important pieces of work you will ever do — and not only for your current relationship. It is work that belongs to you, independent of the man you are with.

The third layer is sociological, and it is the one discussed least. The relational landscape in which we move today — dating apps, the illusion of endless choice, female selectivity pushed to an extreme — did not exist twenty years ago. This context weighs on both sexes in ways that are entirely new, and it has generated new behavioural strategies. One of them is called monkey branching: the tendency to never let go of one branch before securing the next — to secretly prepare an exit while still officially with someone.

This is not an exclusively male behaviour — studies show both sexes engage in it — but when a man does it within your relationship, here is precisely what you feel without being able to name it: he is there, but he is no longer there. He is physically present, he comes home in the evening, he holds your hand, and yet something in him is already building elsewhere. His attention drifts. His phone becomes an object kept face-down on the table. His long-term plans grow vague. His tenderness still functions in episodes, but no longer as a steady current.

This book will explain why this phenomenon has become so commonplace, which concrete signals allow you to recognise it, and — above all — what can be done when it occurs in your relationship. Because even monkey branching is not inevitable; it is a pattern that can be named, stopped, and repaired — if it is identified in time.

What You Will Not Find in This Book

There are several things I have forbidden myself from writing, and I want to name them upfront so you know exactly where you stand.

You will not find generalisations of the type "all men...", because that is false, simplistic, and toxic. Men do not all lie. Most do not lie any more than most women. Speaking of an entire sex as a single bloc is an intellectual error and a personal injustice — the same women who suffer from being reduced to their gender gain nothing by reducing their partner to his.

You will not find a list of "foolproof signs he is lying to you", because those lists are clinically wrong. Any given sign can be produced by a cause entirely other than lying: stress, fatigue, a professional worry, an unresolved quarrel with a sibling. When someone promises you a foolproof sign, they are lying to you — and pushing you toward catastrophic decisions on the basis of coincidence.

You will not find any method for "trapping" your partner, because all such methods destroy the relationship without producing a single truth. Going through a phone, staging a test, lying yourself to see what he does — these tactics turn your relationship into a laboratory and your bond into a surveillance contract. Even if you find what you are looking for, you will have lost something far more serious than what you found.

You will not find excuses for real lies, either. Understanding why a man lies does not mean forgiving him. Avoidant attachment is not a permission slip. Male socialisation is not a blank cheque. The sociological context justifies nothing. This book will help you see clearly what is happening, but the decision about what you do next — stay, leave, seek help, wait, confront — belongs entirely to you, and I will never make that decision for you.

How to Read This Book

The structure is deliberately cumulative. Each section builds on the one before it.

Part I helps you name what you are feeling and recognise its sources — collective, personal, and present. It gives you an initial framework that, by itself, already brings relief to many women — because finding words for what you are living through is no small thing.

Part II opens up the sociological dimension. This is likely the most unexpected part of the book — the one in which you will understand why certain behaviours you have observed are not "coincidences" but form part of a larger pattern. Monkey branching and avoidant attachment are explained in detail here, with supporting research.

Part III breaks down the four psychological mechanisms that lead a man to lie within an established relationship. You will learn to distinguish between the lie of conflict avoidance (minor in isolated instances, toxic when chronic), the lie that protects self-image (the one that conceals socialised male shame), the lie born of alexithymia (when he cannot access his own inner truth), and the lie of active concealment (which covers something specific, and must be treated as such).

Part IV is the most practical. It offers a concrete four-step dialogue protocol, a guide to reading five observable signals without crossing into investigation, and the clinical markers that indicate it may be time to seek help — alone or as a couple.

The appendices contain fifteen CBT exercises you can use immediately, twelve anonymised clinical case studies that will allow you to recognise your own situation in those of other women, a complete scientific bibliography for further reading, and a selection of additional resources.

One Last Word Before We Begin

What you are holding is neither an investigation nor a detection manual. It is a tool for understanding — yourself first, your partner second, and your relationship third. If, by the end of the book, you decide to ask him a question you never dared ask before, that will be good. If you decide instead that there was nothing to look for, that will be good too. And if you decide it is time to leave, I hope you do so with the clarity and calm that only understanding can bring — and not in anger or exhaustion.

Your doubt deserves to be heard. It feeds on three real sources, and it calls for three different readings. This book is written to help you stop being at its mercy, and to finally know, calmly, what to do with it.

Let's work through it together.

PART I

Naming What You Feel
