

Humans Are Pretty Lousy Lie Detectors

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On television, it all looks so simple. For a fraction of a second, the suspect raises the corner of his mouth. He is happy because he thinks the investigators are wrong about where he planted the bomb. But when his interrogator mentions the correct place, the terrorist's face betrays a flash of rage. And he shrugs his shoulders as he pronounces his innocence. The evidence is open-and-shut as far as the expert is concerned: The suspect's body language contradicts his words. He is lying.

The expert on microexpressions in the TV series *Lie to Me* is the alter ego of Paul Ekman, age 86, a world-renowned researcher of lying and emotion. He not only advised the creators of the program but has also been called upon by numerous U.S. agencies, such as the FBI and CIA. Ekman's credo is that the truth is written on our face.

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