

# The Pinocchio Effect

By Joseph Tkach

**D**o you remember the character Pinocchio? The wooden puppet whose nose would grow longer every time he told a lie? Well, that story may not actually be as far-fetched as it may seem.

Researchers from the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Granada in Spain have discovered that when a person tells a lie, there is an increase in the temperature around their nose and in the orbital muscle in the inner corner of their eyes. They are, of course, calling it the Pinocchio Effect.

Researchers at the University of Notre Dame performed a 10-week study and found that telling fewer lies can literally improve your health. This new research shows that when people managed to reduce their lies, they reported significantly improved physical and mental health. Notre Dame Psychology professor and lead author, Anita Kelly says: “Participants could purposefully and dramatically reduce their everyday lies, and that in turn was associated with significantly improved health. Those who reduced their lying suffered less from physical complaints such as sore throats and headaches, as well as feeling tense or melancholy”.

According to a “Science of Honesty” study, recent evidence indicates that Americans average about 11 lies per person, per week. Frankly, that seems a bit conservative. With my tongue buried deep in my cheek, I wonder if they included politicians in their research. Regardless, it does seem to be a scientific fact that lying

is a health hazard. The old saying that honesty really is the best policy, especially when it comes to your overall health and well-being, holds up in this case.

I always find it fascinating when scientific advances are touted as if some new truth has been discovered, only to find it has been revealed in the Bible many centuries ago. I like the way the Living Bible renders what the Apostle Paul wrote: “Stop lying to each other; tell the truth, for we are parts of each other and when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves” (Ephesians 4:25).

Paul also boldly stated in a letter he wrote to Titus that it is impossible for God to lie. Our triune God is not restricted by time, space, or any physical force. As other scriptures show, with God anything is possible. But perhaps we should say: “nearly anything”. His very character has determined that he will never do some things, because to do them would be to contradict the nature of his core being. Since he created us, it follows that he really does know what is best for us. That includes telling the truth.

You may remember that Pinocchio’s great dream was to be transformed from being a wooden puppet into a real boy. Eventually this happens, and he becomes a real son to the man who made him. Again, an

interesting analogy, because God—who, remember, cannot lie—has told us that he will transform us, restoring us to whom we were meant to be. That is the truth, and I tell you this with confidence. My nose is not getting any longer.

This is a transcript of the weekly *Speaking of Life* radio programme by Joseph Tkach, President of Grace Communion International. For more information visit [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org).

