

LIES AND DECEPTION IN COUPLES THERAPY

COUPLES CONFERENCE PANEL

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General: difference between lying as active deception that takes advantage of the spouse, and withholding information from the past

1. Dealing with lies and deception that have come out

- Getting at meaning to the liar and the other
- The liar is responsible
- But there may be dynamics influencing such as mutual conflict avoidance
- Open secrets: when one lies and the other chooses not to bring it up, e.g., emotional affair

2. Lying/deceiving the therapist and the spouse

- Compromises the therapy
- Hard to deal with because we tend to assume non-deception
- Biggest examples: financial and affairs
- Handling
 - When something does not add up
 - Talking to the person separately
 - Saying you are confused
 - Normalizing the secret (e.g., emotional affairs, contact with ex-affair partner)
 - Challenge: Saying you're having trouble believing
 - Always affirm if the client comes clean
 - Working on the meanings and healing with spouse
 - Don't take it personally and pounce

Ref. Doherty, W. J. (2021). *The ethical lives of clients*. American Psychological Association.