



Caught in a Lie? Don't Take it Lying Down

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Well, well, well. After the release of the NFL's investigation into Deflategate, it appears that Tom "Terrific" Brady isn't quite so terrific after all. In fact, his bald-faced lie that he had no knowledge of the situation is the public image equivalent of throwing a pick-six (an interception run back for a touchdown for you non-football fans.) At least he didn't wag his finger at us the way Bill Clinton did during his infamous "I did not have sexual relations with that woman..." denial about tarnishing blue dresses in the White House.

But upon further review (as NFL referees like to say) of Brady's January press conference, there were some telltale signs that the Patriots' field general had gone AWOL with the truth. When filler language comprises close to 50% of your sound bites, the audience should sport a healthy suspicion.

"I didn't, you know, have any, uh, you know, I didn't alter the ball in any way."

"I would never, you know, uh, you know, have someone do something that was outside the rules."

Interestingly, when Brady was not in direct denial mode, none of that filler crept in.

Our first edict to clients in a media training session is: "the truth is non-negotiable." If you're not prepared to tell the truth, then don't get up there in front of others spewing some bogus narrative. Breaking the rules is one thing, lying about it and covering it up is frequently the more unpardonable sin. Unfortunately, human instinct often deludes us into thinking that no one will find out the truth. If you're hard wired to think that way, installing new crisis management circuitry could save you a lot of problems.

So let's say you are caught in a lie at work. Is there a way to restore your credibility and salvage your reputation? The good news is, redemption is possible but you must own up to the deception. As difficult as falling on your sword may be, it's the only viable route. And if you do it with one clean thrust, you're less likely to bleed to death than the multiple wounds that get inflicted when the truth trickling out is in direct contradiction to the story you told.

Coming clean might sound like: "How I originally described what happened is actually not how events really unfolded and I think it's vital that I give you the accurate account."

Or: "I wasn't 100% truthful when I answered your question the other day. I feel terrible about it and it's been bothering me ever since I said it. I'm sorry. Please let me correct my mistake."

Or: "The truth is, when you asked me that question the other day, I was caught off guard and unprepared and in a moment of weakness and fear I said something I shouldn't have. Please forgive me. It's not in my nature to do that and I'll make sure it never happens again."

Eventually Tom Brady will have to face the media who will blitz him like a crazed middle linebacker. How should he handle it? No justifications, no qualifications, no rationalizations - just the truth. "It was just days away from the Super Bowl and I was anxious about what the truth would do to our team's chances to win the Super Bowl. I know I have disappointed a lot of people, angered many others and for that I am deeply sorry. We're all susceptible to human weakness. Mine is certainly no less than anyone else's."