

Chatterbox #14 – White lies

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp ...

Maura: And Maura. How are you, Harp?

Harp: I'm a little squeaky, did you hear that?

Maura: Too much karaoke again?

Harp: I think so. I like to sing too much. How are you?

Maura: Oh, I'm good, I'm good. My throat's good.

Harp: OK, good. Well, we're here to bring you the **Chatterbox** podcast.

Maura: Yes, this is the episode at Culips where we chat and we talk about all kinds of interesting stuff.

Harp: Exactly. And if you have any questions, or you want to learn more, make sure you check out the website, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Sign up to be a member and look at the Lipservice because there you can find the Detailed Explanations, the transcripts, and even the quizzes.

Maura: Yeah, check them out.

Harp: So, what are we going to talk about today?

Maura: Well, I'm going to tell you the **truth**, Harp. We're talking about **lies**. We're talking about **lies** and not being honest, not saying the **truth**.

Harp: Exactly. The **little white lie versus brutal honesty**.

Maura: Right. So, what is, first, a **little white lie**? What is that?

Harp: So, a **lie** is when you don't tell the **truth**, when you maybe tell **half the truth** or you miss something. And the **truth** is when you tell what's real, what's actually happened.

Maura: Right. And what is a **little white lie**? A **little white lie** is a small **lie**, not about anything important. Like you said, maybe you say **half of the truth**.

- Harp: A **little white lie** could be something like, if you don't like maybe someone's shirt you could say, "Oh, that's pretty," if they ask you.
- Maura: Right.
- Harp: You know? Like, **it's not going to kill anyone, it's not going to end the world**, it's just something small, maybe you don't like it, but you want to be nice to your friend.
- Maura: Right. Or you go to someone's house for dinner and they make pizza. And you really don't like onions, but they put onions on the pizza and they ask you, "Oh, do you like the pizza?" And you say, "Yeah, it's delicious," because, well, you don't like onions, but you don't really want to tell them that, it's a bit **rude** or **impolite**.
- Harp: Exactly. So, that's a **little white lie**. So, a **little white lie** is something that is usually to protect someone's feelings, I would say.
- Maura: Yeah, you want to be polite, you don't want to be **rude**. So, what's the other one? **Brutal honesty**. So, **brutal honesty** is when you tell the complete truth and it can be rude or impolite.
- Harp: Exactly. Sometimes people don't want to hear **brutal honesty**.
- Maura: Right. You don't care about **manners**, but you completely say the **truth**.
- Harp: I love this expression because it's so interesting when you think of the two words together. So, if something is "**brutal**," like, for example, you could say that exam was **brutal**. That means it was very hard, it was very ... it was extreme, it was not nice, it was ... it's just very hard word.
- Maura: Yeah, it's kind of a violent word.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. And then **honesty**, you think of a very positive thing, someone told me the **truth**. It was ... yeah, someone who is being truthful and so when you put the two words together, **brutal honesty**. It's an interesting little expression.
- Maura: Right, because sometimes when you're honest it *is* **rude** or it hurts someone's feelings. There are a lot of things that you can say that are the **truth**, but they're not nice.

- Harp: Exactly. And I think that the best way to explain this, the **little white lie versus brutal honesty**, is to explain the story that I found in the newspaper today.
- Maura: OK, yeah. Tell me about it.
- Harp: OK, so it's a man who decided for one year that he was going to tell his wife—they've been married for, I think, five years—he was going to tell her the **brutal truth** every time. There were going to be no **little white lies**. So if she was sitting on the couch eating chocolate he would call her **lazy**. If she asked him, "Do I look fat?" he would say, "Yeah, you look a little fat."
- Maura: Wow.
- Harp: Yeah. So, normally you would say, "Oh no, you look wonderful," or "No, it's OK, you can take a little break and sit on the couch." But, this man, for one year, decided to tell his wife, his friends, everyone, the truth all the time.
- Maura: So did they get divorced?
- Harp: No, it's interesting. We'll put the link for the article on Lipservice so you can read it yourself. But they gave the woman's perspective and they gave the man's perspective and she was very happy in the ending. After one year she thought he was better at communicating, he was honest, but not in a rude way. It was something she wanted to hear, even though maybe in the beginning she thought didn't want to hear it. Maybe she thought that she didn't want to hear that she looked fat, but maybe she would exercise more. It was kind of a situation like that.
- Maura: OK, and it also depends sometimes the way you tell the truth. You can still say the truth, but in a nice way.
- Harp: Exactly. I agree with you, can you give me an example?
- Maura: Sure, an example could be, you're shopping with your friend and she's **trying on** new shirts, and she **tries on** the first shirt and it looks good, and then she **tries on** the second shirt and it doesn't look good. So, your friend asks you, "How does this shirt look?" Instead of saying something **brutally honest** like, "It doesn't look good," you could say something like, "Well, I liked the first shirt better."
- Harp: Exactly. So if you're **brutally honest** you would say the second shirt is horrible, it makes you look bad, but Maura in this example was very honest, she said, "I liked the first one better, it looks nice on you."

- Maura: Exactly.
- Harp: Now do you think that you're a **brutally honest** person?
- Maura: I'm not **brutally honest**, I try to be honest. And kind of like the example I just gave, I'm honest but I try to do it in a polite or nice way. What about you, Harp?
- Harp: I think sometimes I'm **brutally honest**.
- Maura: Yeah?
- Harp: Yeah, and it's not good because I'm naturally a very honest person, but sometimes when I say something people don't want to hear that.
- Maura: Right, has it ever gotten you in trouble?
- Harp: Yeah, definitely. I've had disagreements with my friends because I was **brutally honest** about something. I'm usually very honest to the point where I'm **brutally honest** when I think that my friends need to hear it. You know, if they're in a bad relationship or if they're getting themselves into a lot of **debt**. If it's a big problem, I'm usually pretty good about being **brutally honest**, but most of the time I like to be honest in a nice way.
- Maura: OK, but I think that that is actually a really good quality because a lot of people do appreciate real **honesty** because they really want to know the truth.
- Harp: Exactly, I agree. Now do you know who's really honest, all the time pretty much?
- Maura: This is like a funny little **riddle**. Someone who's honest all the time? I'm not sure.
- Harp: I would say kids.
- Maura: Yes, that is true.
- Harp: They don't have that **filter**. They haven't learned the **little white lies**.
- Maura: Right. They're not conscious of when we're supposed to tell a **little white lie**, they always tell the **truth**.

- Harp: Exactly. So they're the ones who will tell you, "Oh, you look fat," "Oh, that dress looks ugly," "Oh, your hair looks weird." You know, kids are very honest.
- Maura: Yeah, but because they're kids, they can **get away with it**. They're allowed to do it. And everyone laughs and thinks they're cute.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly.
- Maura: Yeah, I think lying, **white lies** and **brutal honesty**, they're definitely cultural. So, send us a message, or comment on this episode on our website and tell us about lying or **honesty** in your country or your culture.
- Harp: Definitely. It depends on where you are in terms of what people are willing to tell each other.
- Maura: Yeah, exactly. OK, so don't forget to go to our website and check out the Lipservice for this episode.
- Harp: Yes, that's about it for us today. Bye, everyone.
- Maura: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

A lie

A **lie** is any statement that is not true. For example, it is raining outside and you say, "It is sunny." That is a **lie**. It is false.

(Little) white lies

A **white lie** (or, a **little white lie**) is a kind of **lie** or untrue statement. A **white lie** is a small **lie**, a **lie** that we use to be respectful or to not cause conflict.



Here are some examples of **little white lies** in North America:

- Telling someone their new baby is really cute, but it actually is not very cute.
- Telling someone you already have plans in order to not do something with that person, but you actually don't have plans.
- You forget your friend's birthday and when you remember you pretend that you knew it was the birthday.
- Telling someone they look good in a shirt, when they do not. (We use this example in the episode.)
- You say you are sick and don't go to work when you are really not sick.
- Lying about your age or weight.

There are so many more examples. Some people might consider a **lie** a "**little white lie**" and another person might think that the **lie** is a big **lie**. It depends on the person.

Fiona: Did you tell them you were sick?

Bruce: Yes. It was just a **little white lie**.

Half (the) truth

The expression "**half truth**" is really a synonym for "**little white lie**." Sometimes we say something that is not completely untrue. For example, "I told him I couldn't go to my party because I was sick. But really, I just had a small headache." This is a kind of **half truth**. Or we could say, "I only told **half the truth**."

Truth

Telling the **truth** is the complete opposite of telling a **lie**. And we will use the same example as above to illustrate telling the truth: it is raining outside and you say, "It is raining." This is the **truth**. It is a fact. The adjective for "**truth**" is "true."

Brutal honesty

We can say “**brutal honesty**” or “**to be brutally honest.**” This is to be very honest. Sometimes when people are completely honest it can be rude, impolite, or hurtful.

For example, Shelly asks, “Do you like the cake I made for you?” And then Don replies, “No, I think it is really horrible.” Don is **brutally honest**.

This might be a time when you may want to use a **little white lie**.

Sometimes people may need to hear **brutal honesty**. For example, someone says “ My boyfriend is abusive, but I am not sure what I should do.” A friend could respond, “I am going to be **brutally honest** with you. You should leave him right away.”

So sometimes **brutal honesty** can be good and necessary. Some people like to hear the **truth** even if it hurts.

Here is the difference in how we use “**brutal honesty**” and “**to be brutally honest**”:

I don't want to hear **brutal honesty**.
I am going to be **brutally honest** with you.

Versus

This word is often written in its short form, “**vs.**,” but is pronounced the same: “**versus.**” This means that two things are against each other, like in a competition or comparison.

It is often used in sports. For example, my team **versus** your team. This means that these teams will play against each other and compete.

In this episode, we look at **brutal honesty versus little white lies**, we compare them.

It's not going to kill anyone / It's not going to end the world

These two expressions, “**It's not going to kill anyone**” and “**It's not going to end the world**” mean that something is not so important that it would have big effects like killing someone, or everyone.

These two sentences are exaggerations. In English, sometimes we like to exaggerate (to increase something to a state that is not normal). Sometimes we exaggerate a lot!

Of course, it is true that most small **lies** will not kill someone and will not end the world. This is obvious. In this case, we only want to say that it is something that does not have a big impact, it is not something that is very important.

In the episode, Harp says that telling someone a shirt is nice when it really is not (telling a **white lie**) is not so important. This **white lie** will not have big effects, like ending the world.

Try on

We usually **try on** clothes or shoes when we are shopping. When we try a new piece of clothing, we wear it for a short time and then we decide if we want to buy it. The verb for testing new clothes is “to **try on**.”

We can say, for example, “to **try on** a new pair of shoes” or “to **try** a new pair of shoes **on**.” The verb can stay together (like in the first examples) or move apart (like in the second).

Debt

“To be in **debt**” or “to have **debt**” means that you have money that needs to be paid back to another person or organization, like a bank. Many students have student **debt**, because they borrowed money to go to college or university.

For example, the bank gave me \$10,000 to go to school, and so I am now in **debt**. I owe the bank \$10,000.

Another interesting thing about the word **debt** is the silent B. When we say this word, we do not pronounce the B, and so it sounds more like, “det.” Go back and listen to this episode to hear Harp say “**debt**.”

Riddle

A **riddle** is a word puzzle that has a question and the listener has to find the answer.

Harp says, “Now do you know who is really honest, all the time pretty much?” And Maura jokes that this is a **riddle**. It is some kind of puzzle that Maura must find the answer to.

Here is an example of another example of a **riddle**.

*A man and his son were in a car accident. The man was killed and his son was taken to the hospital. When he arrived at the hospital the doctor said, “I cannot operate on this boy. He is my son.” How is this possible? (This is the end of the **riddle**).*

Many people assume that the doctor is a man (the boy's father) and so it is confusing. Typically doctors were men, but this is no longer true.

The answer is very simple. The doctor was the boy's mother.

Filter

A **filter** is a tool that people use to separate things, usually involving a liquid or gas. When people looked for gold in rivers, it was a **filter** that let the water pass through, but kept the gold pieces (and rocks) in place to be inspected.

People often **filter** their water. They let their water pass through a **filter** and it removes bad things in the water. Then the water that passes through is good to drink. This is the literal definition, but Harp uses it in a different way. She uses **filter** to describe children's behaviour. Adults understand that some things are rude or **brutally honest**, and so they decide what they say (or use a **filter**). Harp says that children don't have that **filter** and so they say whatever they think. In this case "**filter**" is like socialization.



Get away with it

"**To get away with it**" or "**to get away with something**" means that a person did something disrespectful, illegal or bad and no one caught them, so they were not in trouble. The person was not punished for doing something wrong, they **got away with it**.

Maura says that kids can **get away with** saying whatever they think because they are young and cute. This means that a kid can say something rude, but they do not get into trouble for it. Kids **get away with** a lot of stuff.

Here are some other examples with "**get away with**":

- Jon: I can't believe Cindy cheated on the test.
Verona: Yeah, I can't believe she **got away with it**.
- Jessica: The boss lets her **get away with** so much.
Harry: I know. It's so unfair.

Quiz (see the answers at the end of this Lipservice)

1. **What is the expression for small lies that usually have few or no bad consequences?**

- a) white lies
- b) black lies
- c) red lies
- d) blue lies

2. **What kind of honesty is so honest that it can sometimes be rude?**

- a) brittle honesty
- b) brutal honesty
- c) big honesty
- d) bragging honesty

3. **Jon :** OK, I will watch the game with you tonight. Who is playing?
Ted: It is The Blue Jays _____ the White Sox.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) with
- b) on
- c) versus
- d) in

4. **When we say, “It’s not going to kill anyone,” or “It’s not going to end the world,” what do we mean?**

- a) something is not very important and will not have big consequences
- b) something is very important and will have big consequences
- c) something is dangerous and very important
- d) something is safe, but could have big consequences

5. **Shauna:** I just finished school and I paid for it myself. I had to borrow money and so now I have to start paying back my _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) debt
- b) dung
- c) doubt
- d) dog

6. **We are in the desert. There are two men, each with a pack on his back. One is dead. How did he die?**

This is an example of what?

- a) a wordie
- b) an answer
- c) a rider
- d) a riddle

7. **Wally:** Joshua took a bunch of books from his sister and he didn't ask but she didn't notice.

Madison: Wow! She loves her books. I can't believe he _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) went far from it
- b) went away from it
- c) got away with it
- d) got away from it

Answers: 1.a 2.b 3.c 4.a 5.a 6.d 7.c