

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

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ALLURE: Detecting Deception & Truth

By Rick Nielsen

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As corrections professionals, wouldn't it be important to accurately detect deception and truth? When was the last time an offender asked you for something, attempted to manipulate you, said he was suicidal, yelled at you in language unfit to print here, and so on? Knowing how sincere, or truthful, he was could make you more effective in your work, while also decreasing on-the-job stress and improving job safety.

Everyone in corrections has heard the cliché "we could tell he was lying because his lips were moving." Recognizing non-verbal behavioral cues, like moving lips, helps us in our work. But those with experience in corrections also know that offenders sometimes tell the truth.

Physical evidence and witness testimonies are still the legal standard for truth in our business. But today we can also benefit from the proven behavioral cues which give us insight into the veracity of our subjects' statements.

The purpose of this series of five articles is to understand the reliable methods

of detecting deception and truth using proven behavioral cues and applying them to our work.

Let's get started.

First, we'll define deception. Of the many definitions we could use, let's agree deception is withholding information to gain an advantage, without informing the target. This definition of deception does not include entertainment, or works of fiction, since they at least infer an explanation to the audience.

According to our definition, this kind of withheld information harms the target. The harm could be anything, from frustrating informal investigations to physical injury or death.

There is a legal basis for using these methods to detect deception and truth. It's called reasonable suspicion. It began with the Terry v. Ohio case in 1968. Reasonable suspicion allows law enforcement and corrections to search suspects after seeing their behavioral cues which suggest criminal activity. Reasonable suspicion correctly applied does not violate fourth amendment rights to unlawful searches.

But there are also ethical and personal limits to reasonable suspicion. Ethically, you have to be able to articulate your reasons for searching any offender. You have to be able to prove that you were only performing your duty to the best of your ability. You have to prove you weren't cruel.

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ALLURE: Detecting Deception & Truth

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It is my opinion that once you start down this path, you can't turn it off. In fact, you may get better and better, to the point that your accuracy can surpass polygraphs. Using all the methods listed in this article series, you can become aware of the intentions of others without them saying even one word. As you improve in these methods, you'll see things in your closest friends that you've never seen before. Most of these new revelations will be good, though a few may not. Someday soon you may have to ask yourself, "Does what I see now have to be a deal-breaker?" Only you can answer that.

Before continuing, I should say a little more about polygraphs. Polygraphs only measure autonomic or physiological responses to stress. (We'll discuss these responses, and how to observe them on our own, in a subsequent article.) According to the federal government, polygraph accuracy is just not good enough to be relied upon. Specifically, polygraphs incorrectly identify truthful persons as liars 75% of the time! The US Congress has published several reports recommending federal agencies stop spending taxpayer dollars on polygraphs.

Some traditional cues have also been proven unreliable as indicators of lying. These include gaze aversion, fidgeting, and stuttering. These cues have no statistically significant relationship to lying.

However, controlling behaviors, like maintaining eye contact, remaining still, and speaking slowly and clearly, may indicate withholding information, and thus deception. Generally, cues that everyone knows about involving behavior that can be readily inhibited on the one hand or voluntarily acted out on the other won't be very reliable if the stakes are high and the liar does not want to be caught.

Exercising caution is paramount, when assessing truth and deception, and not just with polygraphs. There is no Pinocchio's nose. But there are proven, behavioral cues, which we'll discuss further in subsequent articles in this series, including these four channels: Text Only Cues; Verbal Cues; Body Cues; and Head Cues. Body Cues and Head cues also include the physiological or polygraph cues mentioned above.

Before leaving this introduction, let me offer my ALLURE acronym as a way to keep our detection methods organized and balanced. (ALLURE is copyright © 2009 Richard A. Nielsen) ALLURE stands for ASK, LOOK, LISTEN, UNDERSTAND, REPEAT and ERRORS.

First we must ASK the right questions, questions that elicit behavioral responses.

We have to LOOK for inconsistencies, incongruities, and changes in baseline behaviors, including stress signs and controlling behaviors. You've probably heard about baseline behaviors before. They're a corrections standard we use daily in working with offenders. We assess offender behavior against their individual behavioral baselines.

As we LOOK for inconsistencies, we also LISTEN to their voice and their word choices.

We strive to UNDERSTAND all their behavioral cues in context.

We REPEAT the process as often as needed to assess their truths and deception attempts.

While we do all of these, we must beware of and avoid ERRORS in our assessments and conclusions. We have to correctly identify the offenders' individual idiosyncrasies, the stress and fear a truthful person may feel when accused, and any voluntary action that can be faked.

Join me next time, to learn about the classes of cues within each channel.

Send Us Your Email Address!

This is the last issue of the Correctional Oasis to be sent by regular mail. To keep receiving it, **please** send us your email address at desertwaters@desertwaters.com.

Let us know if you do NOT have an email address. Thank you!

Grumpy Tablets

An Aussie's Point of View

I have invented a pressure-release mechanism for easing tensions between me and my wife and diffusing differences of opinion before they escalate into arguments. It's called the GRUMPY TABLET. Just like little children might have an imaginary friend, I have Grumpy tablets.

Here is the first scenario for how I use them.

I've just finished a bad day at work. I'm beat after a 12 hour shift, still pondering on how else a problematic incident could have been handled. I just want to throw my uniform off, have a shower and relax outside for a while with a beer. Arrrrrrrrrr. . . . I just want some peaceful time on my own, with no radio calls or prisoners asking, "Can I have this?" or "Can you do such and such for me?" I want my space and I'm looking forward to it. Quiet, uninterrupted ME time.

When I get home my wife greets me with, "Hi Honey, how was your day?" Out of the blue I snap at her. "How do you think it was? It was s---. I had a normal rat's day with Crims surrounding me, while you were here with *normal* people." Wham! Just like that the bickering starts.

After a few words back and forth, things begin to cool down a little. I spend 30 minutes on my own sipping a beer or playing with the dog, and I feel a little embarrassed. So do I go in and apologize immediately?

Nope. It is not in my nature or way of life since working in Corrections. *But I have a secret weapon.*

I go to wherever my wife is and start to look for something very intensely. Maybe in a cupboard or on a shelf or under some cushions quite close to her. Eventually she says, "What are you looking for? Can I help?" I pretend to look very hard a second or two longer and say, "No thanks. I'm just looking for your grumpy tablets. How many did you take today?" She replies quite sharply, still hurting from the argument, "None, you must have taken them all, with the attitude you brought home." Immediately the tension in the air eases. "Nope. I'm sure you've had them all," I shoot back. She snaps, "I don't think so!!" By now she's beginning to smile a little. We soon end up laughing and a bit of fun banter goes back and forth about who has eaten the Grumpy tablets. Eventually I have the courage to say I'm sorry. And I usually get an apology from her as well, even if I don't deserve it.

Second scenario:

I come into the room and my wife is obviously in a savage mood, ignoring me after we've had an argument. This might be half an hour later or even longer. I go through the same thing I had done in the first scenario. I might say, "Have you seen that bottle?" I might get a short sharp reply like, "What bottle?" I ask again. "You know, the small brown bottle that was here earlier." She looks totally confused and is still glaring angrily at me. So I say, "You know, that small brown bottle full of the grumpy tablets you finished off earlier." Good plan now is to duck and try to laugh a little!! Act a little playful and defensive. But I guarantee you there will be a hardened smirk on her face that turns into a smile of sorts. THAT is the time to say something like, "I wish we could hide those Grumpy tablets. I'm sorry."

The hostility in the air has been cleared. You will feel like you have not conceded to being totally wrong (and you MIGHT have been...) and you can "make up" with some nice words and maybe a hug.

We also use the Grumpy tablet scenario when we think we may be *heading* for an argument. "Don't go looking for those Grumpy tablets!" Reply: "I don't need to look. They are probably in your pocket!" If you don't laugh at this, then you really *do* need to take a dose of laughter pills!! And because we end up having a light argument about who, in fact, *has* been eating the Grumpy tablets, we are diverted away from the situation that we had started to argue about earlier. Now this does not always work, but I think it works more times than not.

Only recently, while in Florence, Colorado and into our second week living out of suitcases in a Motel room, we were sitting on the bed watching TV. We had had a small "verbal" earlier and were basically ignoring each other to gain some space. I leaned over my wife and picked up a bottle of vitamin tablets and said, "Look how many you have taken. You'll OD if you take any more!" Quick as a flash she replied, "How can you OD on vitamin tablets?" I said, "Oh. I thought they were your Grumpy tablets." She retorted, "It wasn't *me* who has been taking them." Situation diffused. Then the fun banter began again.

All praise to my patented GRUMPY TABLETS, free to all who read this article!

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



*a non-profit organization
for the well-being of correctional
staff and their families*

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Winning Attitudes

By Caterina Spinaris Tudor

Over the years I've noticed a number of traits and behaviors among correctional workers who manage to stay healthy and effective on and off the job.

Healthy staff:

- Live in line with positive spiritual values
- Have integrity and professional ethics
- Take responsibility for their actions
- Strive to make a positive difference at work even if in very small steps
- Aim to make the work experience easier on those around them by being helpful, caring, good listeners and mentors
- Are secure in who they are, even while they know that they are still a work in progress
- Do not enjoy tearing people down, but rather aim to build people up
- Notice and point out the good in others
- Avoid the trap of hating offenders, coworkers or "the system"
- Avoid taking the law into their own hands

- Avoid retaliating or taking revenge for actual or perceived offenses
- After addressing issues and processing through hurts, they let go of grudges and move on
- Are careful about what they allow into their mind—what they read, watch, do for entertainment, consider worth their time
- Are solution seekers
- Make sure they have a life outside of corrections, and work hard to protect it
- Seek effective help for themselves when they need it, and do not stop until they find it
- Are more givers than takers, having learned that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Quote of the Month

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give. *Sir Winston Churchill*