

22 54 2009 - What Your Face Says About You

After watching Fox's pilot for their new show, Lie to Me, the other night, I did a little research to find out whether or not it's actually possible to tell whether or not someone's lying just by looking at their face. Long story short? Yes, it is.

Decades ago, a man by the name of Paul Ekman began his work on exploring the infinite facets of human emotion and expression. Many years later, the Facial Action Coding System, a five-hundred page look at the tiny variations in facial expression. Today, his research has been employed by everyone from those in medical professions to computer animators at the desks of Pixar to better understand or emulate the authentic language of human expression.

While Lie to Me is a work of fiction, its premise is very much rooted in truth. A person skilled in FACS recognition may, indeed, be able to accurately deduce the truth and lies that are written on the faces of anyone from any culture at any time.

Of course, it's a little more complicated than that and I'm not fluent enough in medical and psychological speak to give you a good lowdown in something as complex as human expression. Malcolm Gladwell, however, is. If you're interested in learning a little more about the powers of human expression, here's a link to an old article of his about this very subject. It's well worth the read.