Everyday Lies in Close and Casual Relationships

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In 2 diary studies, 77 undergraduates and 70 community members recorded their social interactions and lies for a week. Because lying violates the openness and authenticity that people value in their close relationships, we predicted (and found) that participants would tell fewer lies per social interaction to the people to whom they felt closer and would feel more uncomfortable when they did lie to those people. Because altruistic lies can communicate caring, we also predicted (and found) that relatively more of the lies told to best friends and friends would be altruistic than self-serving, whereas the reverse would be true of lies told to acquaintances and strangers. Also consistent with predictions, lies told to closer partners were more often discovered.