

What can I do?

As soon as you get wind of a family secret, form a plan to extract the information from the relevant party. Make haste, as it is a terrible pity for people to take secrets to the grave.

Tips:

Ritalin is a potent and reasonably easy to obtain and tasteless truth serum and stimulant. A lively conversation is sure to ensue. Alcohol and coffee are quite effective tongue-looseners.

If the family member is feigning deafness, bring with you a large piece of paper and a marker pen.

Visiting a family member who is elderly can be under false pretenses – a useful way to observe and decide how to “move” can be by doing chores. Be careful not to get roped in to incessant labour once the relative gets wind you are after sensitive information.

Try to motivate the person in question to tell you what you want to know. Emotional manipulation is sometimes the only tool you have. Remember: they are lying to you – *do what you need to do. Make haste.*

Grandmother!

What a long
nose you have!

When your elders lie

“Grandmother! What big teeth you have!”

“All the better to lie to you through”

This pamphlet is designed to draw your attention to the fact that your elder family members may lie to you.

Of particular concern are falsehoods concerning the details of the lives of their elders or siblings, even *paternity*.

Who: any family member older than you with something to hide.

What: they may seek to conceal the truth about matters which are thought to be embarrassing or shameful.

Why: by doing so they believe they can control their reality to conform to pre-determined standards.

Where: families that are descendents of demographic groups that value discretion, 'manners' and emotional restraint are particularly vulnerable to being misled.

How: they may tell you out-right lies, or they may omit to inform you of something important. Sometimes they will go to extreme lengths to throw you off the trail also.

When: lies are particularly common when elders are pressed for information. They are also likely to be less forthcoming in direct proportion to the numbers of people present at the time of questioning. Behaviour can improve, conversely, with an intervention, especially when another person they defer to is involved.

Examples:

A young man discovered that his paternal grandfather was not in fact his grandfather, but merely his grandmother's husband. His own grandfather was really another man his grandmother had an affair with. She will not admit to this despite a DNA test corroborating the claim, and the attestation of witnesses to their affair.

A woman learned that her great-aunt had not lost her fiancé in WWII. He was still alive at the time of her recent death, but had had his face blown off.

A teenage boy discovered that his maternal grandmother was not dead, but was instead living not far away. His mother had merely not liked her very much.

A woman discovered by chance that her maternal great grandmother's family had changed her name from Goldstein to Goldsmith to appear less Jewish upon immigrating to a predominantly Anglican community in New Zealand.

A woman still wonders why her paternal grandmother would not speak to any of her siblings; and why her grandmother's mother spent a period of time living around the corner with another man while she was at high school.