Brain scans reveal how one small fib snowballs into a whopper

A study of what goes on in the brain when someone tells a lie could offer a biological explanation for why untruths often “snowball over time,” according to psychologist Tali Sharot of University College London.

When people tell small fibs,…their brain becomes desensitized to the emotional twinge that dishonesty usually causes. Lying becomes easier and telling ever-bigger self-serving whoppers becomes more likely, they found: that may be why nickel-and-diming on tax returns sometimes balloons into massive fraud, why spousal white lies become deeper secrets, and why scientific misconduct escalates from “losing” data to faking findings.

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Sharot and her colleagues suspected that the brain mechanism behind the escalation of dishonesty is “emotional adaptation.”

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“The amygdala responded a lot the first times people lied, but it went down over time,” said lead author Neil Garrett, who is now at Princeton University. “We think this is the first empirical evidence that lying escalates” because of emotional adaptation. That, he added, highlights “the potential danger of engaging in small acts of dishonesty on a regular basis.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Brain study shows how small lies grow into whoppers