His name is Sam and he is not a liar

Once there was this businessman who was on a looooooong flight. He was bored, so he taps on the shoulder of Mr. Sam who was sleeping in the next seat.

Let's play a game says the business man. Sam who is tired, politely declines and goes back to sleep. The business man is adamant; "The rules are like this; I ask you a question if you don't know the answer you pay me $5 and vise versa." Sam says no and goes back to sleep.

The agitated businessman says; "Okay if you don't know the answer you pay $5. If I don't know the answer I pay $500." This catches the attention of Sam. Both because of the very good odds and because he knows that this torment will continue otherwise.

The businessman asks; "How far is it to the moon from earth?". Sam shakes his head and hands over a $5 note. "See? This is fun. Now you ask a question" says the businessman.

Sam asks; "What goes uphill with three legs and comes down with four?"

<Toastmaster, my dear toastmasters>

The businessman thinks and thinks he cannot think of an answer. He asks permission to serf the net. Sam gives permission saying that while he looks for an answer he is going to sleep.

The businessman searches and searches. He emails his friends. He deploys a small army of his office clerks to find a solution. But even after few hours and half way through the trip. He cannot find the answer.

He taps on the shoulder of the sleeping Sam and hands him a $500 note. "Okay it is my turn. What goes uphill with three legs and comes down with four?"

Without a word Sam takes a $5 note out of his wallet, gives it to the businessman and goes back to sleep.

There are two kinds of individuals who fool others. The first kind is liars. They give you false information which you use to derive false conclusions. The second kind are the deceivers. Instead of giving you false information, they "guide" you to arrive at wrong conclusions. It is important to know how they act so that you will not fall victim to their schemes.

First thing they use is, playing on the assumptions that we make due to naïvetés. Sam the deceiver played on the businessman’s assumption that no one would ask a question that they do not know the answer to.

Another day, Sam goes to meet his boss; “Sir, I’ll be straight with you. I know the company is doing badly. But I have three other companies after me. Unless I get a 10% raise I might be in….how should I put this….a difficult position.” After some talking and haggling, the boss agrees to a 5% raise.

After the next month’s salary is paid, the boss catches Sam and asks; “Hay, Sam so now that you are anyway staying with us. Tell me, what are the other three companies that were after you?” Sam replies with “You know boss, later another company joined the chase. And there were four companies”. “Really?” asks the astonished boss, “I did not know that we had that much competition. So what were the
companies?”. “The electric company, water company, and phone company”, Says Sam. “Oh and the Credit Card company joined later.”

Here Sam the deceiver used his boss’ knowledge that his employees are head hunted by other companies to spin the situation in his favour. This is the second method, using the victim’s domain knowledge.

Sam bought a case of rare, very expensive cigars, and then insured them against *pause* fire! Within a month, even before doing a single premium payment to the company, he smoked each and every one of them. Then he goes to the insurance office and makes a claim on the insurance money saying he lost the cigars "in a series of small fires". He showed the ashes as proof.

Naturally the insurance company rejects the claim saying Sam has consumed the cigars in a normal fashion.

Sam sues the insurance company and wins! The judge says that Sam is correct since the insurance company has agreed that the cigars are insurable items and that they are insurable against fire. The insurance company grudgingly paid Sam $15,000 for the rare cigars he lost "in the series of small fires".

What the Insurance Company missed is the fact that Sam never gave a clarification on what would constitute a valid fire. This, my friends, is the third trick; giving partial information.

While it is important to save yourselves from malicious deceivers, you need to realize that like everything made by man, deception is not inherently evil or good. Like white lies, there exist white deceptions.

Once upon a time a large country was about to invade a small country. The lords of the small country called a council meeting. The moral was low. Almost everybody was saying that they cannot win if they were to fight. The General of the Army stood up and said; “I know that we seem to have very bad odds at winning. It looks like surrendering is the better option. But then again, even though our army is small, it is well trained. Since this is a matter of odds, we’ll toss this coin. If it is the heads we fight. If it is the tails, we surrender.” The council, truly desperate, agreed. The coin is tossed and it gives Heads. So they fight and win. After the victory the king wants to see the coin. The General hands it over. It is only then that the king sees that the coin has no tail. It only has head on both sides!

Now you might be wondering what happened to Sam. Well, Sam goes to the bank and cashes his cheque the next day. Immediately he is arrested for 24 counts of arson. He is found guilty of deliberate burning of insured property and sentenced to 24 consecutive one-year terms.

That is how you should handle a malicious deceiver. As Abraham Lincoln said; “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”