

SECRETS – a Social Phenomenon / English Version

INTRODUCTION

SECRETS

– the mere word is enough to make us curious.

What could it mean?

How can I find out more?

Is it anything to do with me?

How come I haven't heard about it?

SECRETS can be beautiful, scary, evil, banal... And they've existed ever since humans have lived together. Their history mirrors that of society – but they are also a mirror of ourselves. However, SECRETS are also a part of our individual lives at many levels. There's hardly a part of our lives that doesn't involve SECRETS.

Whether at home or in the workplace, SECRETS make two groups of people: those who are 'in the know' and those who aren't. So who do we share our SECRETS with? And who shares theirs with us? Sharing secrets brings people closer; not sharing them keeps us apart.

SECRETS require social bonds, such as trust, loyalty and discretion. Sometimes it is up to us to decide who we will tell or not. At other times we may not realise that the choice is somebody else's. In politics, business and families, the circles of those sworn to secrecy can be of varying sizes. So, secrets are not just a mode of communication but a social arrangement as well.

In the 21st century, transparency seems to be in strong demand. Society is keen to know political and business secrets to prevent corruption and abuses of power. Meanwhile, social networks, new forms of communication and state surveillance are closing in on precisely the spaces that allow us to create and maintain personal secrets at all.

So, how much secrecy can we actually handle, in either our private lives or in public life? How public should political negotiations be? How much control do we want businesses to have? And how far do we trust our own family and friends?

This exhibition includes new, seemingly familiar and unexpected takes on the topic of SECRETS. Look closely, listen hard and browse. Ask yourself whether you might even be hiding something from yourself...?

As we approach this question, we will take you not just into the centre of power, or to desks or places of faith, but also into living rooms and children's rooms at home. Welcome to the antechamber of SECRETS. Your journey starts here. Come and see our places of secrecy and confidence!

- Text Spiegel: How much do you actually want to know?
- Text Schublade1: Open up, reveal, shed light on, illuminate, challenge, research, resolve, discover.
Curious? Then you could be the one to reveal the secret of this exhibition. Take a peek behind the curtains, pull open the drawers, decide on your own standpoint, weigh up, discover.
- Text Schublade 2: Private. Public. Your “privacy” is the part of your personal life that you do not want to share in public. We offer it special protection as the place where we live our personalities to the full, out of public view and without having to worry about being watched. The right to privacy is a human right and an established part of all modern democracies.

TEXTS PICTURE FRAMES

- 1 “The human being is a black box. In the western world, priests, judges, philosophers, artists and politicians have lamented since time immemorial the inaccessibility of our hearts, souls and brains. Oh, how they would love to eradicate secrets!” (Manfred Schneider, literary scholar)
- 2 “When children begin to sever their ties with their parents and set off into the great wide world, they start by finding friends at kindergarten and school. There, secrets will not only help them to settle and manage relationships; they also represent knowledge which children know how to use to great effect.” (Gail Saltz, psychiatrist)
- 3 The German word for ‘secret,’ ‘Geheimnis,’ was introduced into the language by the protestant reformer Martin Luther as a translation of “mystery.” ‘Geheim’ stems from the word ‘Heim’ and suggests ‘belonging to the home.’
- 4 “The secret – or the positive or negative concealment of realities – is one of the greatest intellectual achievements of humanity.” (Georg Simmel, sociologist)
- 5 “The confessional secret is the oldest form of data protection.” (Walter Mixa, Bishop)
- 6 “Secrets keep the world together by creating distance and boundaries. Moreover, without them, neither the sacred nor the profane would exist.” (Aleida and Jan Assmann, cultural scholars)
- 7 “Every culture is based on an element of concealment. The progress of mankind depends on it.” (Friedrich Nietzsche, philologist)
- 8 “Ten theses:
 - Publicity and secrecy are mutually exclusive yet complementary terms and phenomena.

- Selectivity of perception, information, subjects, visualisations and interpretations determines the accessibility or secrecy of knowledge.
- Secrets create a double dialectical communication relationship: the bearer of a secret feels the contradictory urge to keep it, yet at the same time to disclose it. The outsider, on the other hand, would like to enter into it, yet at the same time to conceal it.
- Secrets provoke publicity by implying opportunities and dangers.
- The selective processes of publicity suggest secrecy.
- The private public sphere usually remains unpublicised.
- The alleged public interest legitimates both the publicising of private issues and privacy of public ones. Collective and, above all, organised secrets create special audiences.
- Non-publicity is not normally the result of secrecy but of the daily constraints of selective information.
- Public relations is therefore also an unavoidable strategy of secrecy that creates functional secrets at the very least.” (Joachim Westerbarkey, communication scientist)

9 “Family secrets mostly deal with facts, things that happened to one or several family members or that one or more dead or living members did or did not do. These facts frequently entail feelings of embarrassment and/or guilt. (...) Confidentiality often serves a protective purpose, at least from the perspective of the bearer of the secret: it protects the uninitiated, and sometimes also those at the centre of the secret, from the potentially harmful effects of disclosure.” (Helm Stierlin, family therapist)

10 “A rift also gapes between people. For this reason, interpersonal transparency proves impossible to achieve. It is also not worth trying to do so. The other’s very lack of transparency is what keeps the relationship alive.” (Byung-Chul Han, philosopher)

11 “Secrets play a role in any unspecific communication. In general terms, secrecy can be defined as the tactical manoeuvring of information, the delay of its dissemination, careful consideration of what is appropriate to reveal at a given moment, and the concealment or confirmation of a hidden sense.” (Cornelia Bohn, sociologist)

12 “A constitutional state cannot exist without trust. Trust is the expectation borne by hope that we will not be disappointed by those in whom we place our faith.” (Wolfgang Huber, theologian)

13 “‘Others’ will always be a mystery to the ‘ego’. It will never be possible to look into their hearts or explore their souls down to the very core.” (Otto Groth, media scientist)

ALL EYES ON YOU

German angst, German lässigkeit (or nonchalance) or German awareness?

What do the Germans think of surveillance, intelligence agencies and big data?

The SURVEILLANCE PUZZLE shows you a nation between angst and lässigkeit.

(Objektbeschriftung)

- 1. Do you believe that the German state searches its citizens' computers without reasonable grounds for suspicion?**

71% Yes - 27% No

- 2. Are you concerned that the state will observe its citizens more and more as technology continues to advance?**

In 2013, 34.92 million people answered "Yes". In 2015 it was 37.38 million.

- 3. Are you concerned that the German government could be targeted by foreign hackers?**

67.1 % Yes – 24.4 % No

- 4. When using the Internet, do you feel your personal data is adequately protected?**

56 % Yes – 42 % No

- 5. What types of online business do you trust? (Choose more than one if you wish)**

69 % trust online banks – 44 % trust online shops – 20 % trust online dating services – 18 % trust social media

- 6. Cambridge Analytica severely misused the data of Facebook users. Will you will change the way you use the platform?**

27 % Continue as before – 12 % Less than before – 2 % No longer a user – 59 % Don't have a Facebook account

- 7. In your view, how secure are the following ways of saving documents? (Choose more than one if you wish)**

90 % In print – 84 % On a USB stick or external hard drive – 49 % On a computer – 20 % On the Cloud

- 8. Do you think businesses provide adequate protection of your data?**

30 % Yes – 68 % No

WHAT'S YOUR POSITION?

RADICAL OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY have become key social paradigms.

How much of a RIGHT would you like to have TO TRANSPARENCY AND SECRETS? What guidelines should the government set?

What do you think? Create your own picture.

PS: We do not save your data. (Objektbeschriftung)

1: What do you think? Should there be an EXPIRY DATE on state secrets?

- Yes, after four years – at the end of a legislative term
- Yes, after 20 years
- No

“STATE SECRETS are facts, objects or knowledge which are only accessible to a limited category of persons and must be kept secret from FOREIGN POWERS in order to avert a danger of serious prejudice to the external security of the Federal Republic of Germany.” (Section 93 of the German Criminal Code, definition of ‘state secret’.)

2: Do you think the GOVERNMENT should regulate the private trade in data?

- No. It's a free market, so the government shouldn't regulate it
- Yes, through cartel law
- Yes, through tax law

BUYING AND SELLING DATA is big business. International big data companies offer attractive jobs and are major contributors to local and municipal economies. But the data market changes fast, and as ever more big data companies merge, the market is becoming increasingly MONOPOLISED.

3: Do you think that the BASIC LAW should also identify a right to transparency?

- Yes, I do
- No, I don't
- I think the Freedom of Information Act should be amended

The German constitution, also known as the ‘Basic Law’, identifies fundamental rights for citizens, such as the PRIVACY OF CORRESPONDENCE, POSTAL SECRECY AND SECRECY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS. The FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, on the other hand, regulates citizens’ access to official information from federal agencies, which can be granted only on

submission of an application. At the moment, there are calls from some areas of German society for far greater transparency with regard to information about state affairs.

BERLIN PAPERS I

The work of the parliament is reported in its official records and minutes of plenary proceeding. Since 1949, they have been kept by the public information and documentation services of the German parliament. In 2005, the constantly growing pool of collected data was made accessible to all citizens.

CURRENT INVENTORY:

139.330 documents, including 135.178 official records and 4.152 minutes of plenary proceedings (Status: 23 July 2018)

You can access the entire inventory for free any time via

<http://www.bundestag.de/dokumente>. (Objektbeschriftung)

BERLIN PAPERS II

Disclose things yourself. Read. Make visible. (Objektbeschriftung)

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER?

Do you think “SECRET LANGUAGES” (still) exist in our everyday lives?

Listen to these groups of people talking about their specific hobbies and jobs.

Would you be able to join the conversation? (Objektbeschriftung)

RÄLEWÄTSELEWEWALEWAND

CRYPTOGRAPHY is the science or art of encryption and has a long tradition in human societies.

Got the right code?

Have fun! (Objektbeschriftung)

Key length

If the key is considerably shorter than the message, it can eventually be broken by running through every possible option – by ‘brute force attack’, as it’s known. The length of a key refers to the number of possible keys and is often measured in bits. A 3-digit bicycle lock, for example, has 1,000 possible combinations, the equivalent of about 10 bits ($2^{10} = 1024$)

Scytale

Scytale (Greek: baton) is an ancient method of encryption and is based on transposition. It consists of a cylinder with a strip of parchment wound around it. Written on this along the length of the baton is the plaintext message. When the strip is unrolled, a meaningless sequence of letters appears. They become legible only when the strip is rolled onto an identical baton.

Substitution

With this method, individual letters in message are replaced with other letters or symbols. If the same substitution were made every time a letter occurred, frequency analysis would make it easy to guess which symbol represents which letter. So for extra protection, modern-day substitutions replace the letters with different characters every time using a system that is determined by a key.

Keys

The majority of cryptographs combine a general encryption method with a key specifying how to encrypt and decrypt the message. With today’s methods, this tends to consist of a number (as in symmetric encryption, for example). In practice, however, the greatest challenge is how to pass a key on securely without an unauthorised individual identifying. ≥ Asymmetric cryptography, ≥-Quantum cryptography

Transposition cipher

With this method, the letters in a sentence or word are shifted to new positions. Rail Fence cipher is a simple example. Here, plaintext is written alternately on an upper and a lower line. The resulting lines of characters are then written out in sequence, rendering the secret text illegible at first sight. Today transposition cipher is no longer used (on its own).

Cryptography

The word “cryptography” refers to the conversion of a message (“plaintext”) into code (“ciphertext”) to protect its content and make it accessible only to authorised recipients. This protects the information, and safeguards its confidentiality, integrity and authenticity. One especially mysterious example from history is the Voynich manuscript, written during the Renaissance period. To this day, it remains unclear whether or not the manuscript has any meaningful content.

Nowadays cryptography is important primarily in the transmission of digital data (such as confidential emails, online transactions and bank transfers).

Asymmetric cryptography

Asymmetric cryptography uses pairs of keys: a public key, which can be generally familiar, and a private one. The sender of a message can encrypt it with the recipient’s public key. To decrypt the message, however, the receiver’s own private key is required. The system works in much the same way as a padlock: anyone can lock it, but only the person with the key can unlock it.

Strong cryptography

“Strong cryptography” describes methods that remain highly resistant to attack. Not even the latest technologies or the most powerful computers can crack the code within a reasonable period of time. With methods such as \geq DES, the most crucial point is key length. Strong cryptography is fundamentally relevant to state secrets, among other things, so the technologies used are often subject to the same kinds of export controls as arms exports. The US Ministry of Commerce, for example, restricted the export of strong cryptography technology on the NSA’s recommendation (\geq DES).

Quantum cryptography

Quantum cryptography is an innovative way of handling secure key distribution for \geq Symmetric encryption. Quantum mechanical properties can virtually eliminate any possibility of eavesdropping on secret key exchanges. Often, exchanges are carried out using entangled photons from a laser. Once complete, sender and recipient can exchange messages securely using conventional encryption methods.

Symmetric encryption

In symmetric encryption, the sender and recipient use the same cryptographic \geq Key to encrypt and decrypt their communications. A simple example is a variable shift in the alphabet: the first letter is shifted one position further along the alphabet (so “M” becomes “N”, for example); the second letter is shifted by two (turning an “O” into a “Q”), the third by four (“R” becomes “W”) and so on. To know how the system works, the recipient will need the key, which in this case will begin with the numbers 124...

TEST YOURSELF

Working in a job that requires us to keep secrets is a particular challenge.

Test yourself. Could you work in a position of absolute confidence?

(Objektbeschriftung)

Test yourself / English version

Would a job that involves keeping secrets be right for you? (Text Vorderseite)

TEST YOURSELF

This questionnaire helps you to work out whether you would be any good at a job involving secrecy. Please answer as honestly as possible. Rather than telling you whether you are fit for a certain position, the test ascertains whether you would be good in a position as a bearer of secrets.

- Are you male or female?
- Do you like working in teams?
- Is a good working atmosphere important to you?
- Do you have many friends?
- Do people often confide in you?
- Who confides in you?
- Do you believe what they tell you?
- Do you ever feel the need to talk to somebody about the things they have confided in you?
- Have you ever told a friend's great secret to anybody?
- Do you often tell people your secrets?
- Do you think you tell more than ten lies a day?
- Do you think you can keep a secret?
- Do your coworkers see you as trustworthy?
- Do your supervisors see you as trustworthy?
- Do you like talking (a lot)?
- Do you talk a lot about people who are not present?

- Your supervisor tells you a coworker will soon be fired, but your coworker has no idea. Would you spend your lunch break with your coworker?
- Your supervisor tells you she has lost her driving licence after a traffic offence. One day, over lunch, your coworkers are joking about the fact that your boss has been coming to work by bike. Do you tell them what you know?
- Sensitive information lands on your desk about potentially harmful environmental pollution caused by your company. It has happened in an area near where your partner comes from. Do you tell them about it over dinner?
- Your new role and responsibilities at work mean you now have your own office quite a way from that of your coworkers. They have started forgetting to pick you up for lunch. How do you feel?
- Have you ever told a white lie to make yourself look better?
- Will you tell other people about this test?
- Have you cheated a little in this test to make yourself look more trustworthy?

BEARERS OF SECRETS (Text Rückseite)

“The bearer of a secret is a person to whom a secret was confided or otherwise disclosed. The sharer and bearer of a secret must be in a trusting relationship to ensure confidentiality is guaranteed.

You can be party to a secret not only after it has been communicated to you but also after witnessing an event such as a crime.

In working, governmental and political environments, certain people have access, for professional reasons, to secure or classified information that is subject to secrecy or confidentiality provisions.

Many of the professions bound by special secrecy obligations are listed under section 203 StGB (German Criminal Code). It stipulates that violations of this obligation are subject to criminal sanctions. Professional regulations apply, for instance to attorneys (section 43a BRAO - Federal Code for the Legal Profession), notaries (section 18 BNotO - Federal Code for Notaries), tax consultants (section 57 paragraph 1 and section 62 StBerG - Federal Code for Tax Consultants), public accountants (section 43 paragraph 1 sentence 1 and section 50 WiPrO - Federal Code for public accountants), certain agency employees (cf. confidentiality of registration office data pursuant to section 5 paragraph 1 BMG - Federal Act on Registration or statistical confidentiality pursuant to section 16 paragraph 1 BStatG - Federal Statistics Act) as well as to people entrusted with certain duties (cf. privacy of correspondence, postal secrecy and secrecy of telecommunications).

Many other statutory provisions also constitute or make reference to professional secrets, such as sections 1 paragraph 3 sentence 2 and 42a sentence 1 No. 3 BDSG (Federal Data Protection Act),

section 102 AO (Fiscal Code of Germany), section 12 paragraph 1 sentence 2 No. 4 GwG (legislation about tracing profits from serious criminal activities), section 57 paragraph 4 No. 1 k WIPrO (legislation about a professional code of conduct for accountants), section 11a paragraph 8 sentence 1 GewO (Industrial Code) and others. The same applies to standards of professional secrecy, such as section 309 VAG (German Insurance Supervision Act). It is virtually impossible to make up a full list of professional and official secrets subject to legal restrictions.

Special obligations also apply to official military and police secrets. In the civil service, violations can be sanctioned by means of disciplinary measures or the criminal justice system. In Germany, the breach of official secrets in particular is subject to relevant legislation. Special regulations governing access to classified information are contained in the Sicherheitsüberprüfungsgesetz (SÜG, Security Screening Act).

Apart from people in individual professions and institutions (such as legal entities or authorities), and employees bound to secrecy pursuant to industrial, public services law or data privacy law (such as data confidentiality pursuant to section 5 BDSG – Federal Data Protection Act), other parties may also be party to secrets when they receive knowledge about facts or conditions that trigger obligations to secrecy, for instance the adoption secret stipulated under section 1758 BGB (German Civil Code).

Necessary provisions may include observation, surveillance and secret agency actions.”

Source: Wikipedia, German site

WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON SMALL PRINT?

Secrets are not only a permanent component of social interaction but also ever-present in the countless regulations and standards that make up the legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Listen in on the multi-faceted world of confidentiality agreements.

(Objektbeschriftung)

MEATLOAF SANDWICH FOR JUERGEN

JARGON CODES are secret messages hidden in obvious ones and can have various meanings. In official radio communication, for instance, they can be used to transmit private messages or warnings.

But they can also be a way for an employer to deliver a legally unassailable assessment of an employee's work. (Objektbeschriftung)

- Three trucks to the rescue station.
Three meatloaf sandwiches to the rescue station.
- Will Juergen be on shift tomorrow? –
Encoded message of taxi drivers to headquarters in case of danger.
- She was very popular with her coworkers.
She liked to talk a lot and kept her colleagues from work.

10 ATTITUDES

When it comes to **HANDLING SECRETS** – be they personal or professional – we all have our own ideas.

Our protagonists include a priest, a secretary, a politician, an author, a journalist and a historian. Which one said what? (Objektbeschriftung)

Fig. 1:

“To me, adopting a **STANDPOINT** means acting on the basis of a **FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF** that underpins the **COMPLETE INDIVIDUAL – BODY, MIND AND EMOTION**”

Christiane Woopen, Chair of the European Ethics Committee

Figur 2:

What's my view on secrecy?

“In a digital world, secrets are under severe threat. Essentially, that's not a bad thing – for instance, when whistleblowers disclose major shortcomings. I think it's appropriate and very important for society.” (Konstantin von Notz)

“I don't feel the need to make a secret and its sorrows my own. I always keep my distance.” (Rainer Maria Schießler)

“I consider myself mainly a bearer of secrets. But it hasn’t always been easy to treat with professional discretion all the things I experience in my everyday work.” (Petra Balzer)

“I see myself as somebody who discloses secrets to make them public and encourage discussions.” (David Schraven)

“It is not so much about the spectacular disclosure of a secret or a judge’s indictment of misconduct but about interpreting contexts in a new way. (Frank Bösch)

“When private and social secrets are intertwined, as is the case with the history of many Germans, I am always keen to take a closer look.” (Ines Geipel)

6 PERSPECTIVES ON ... SECRETS

Dive into the worlds of the six people in our film. They each take a different perspective on dealing with SECRETS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE for both themselves and society. (Objektbeschriftung)

SHADOW OF SUSPICION

PRIVACY centres on your personal affairs, not only at home but also in public and in the internet.

Imagine you went to a party yesterday and had an interesting chat with another guest... (Objektbeschriftung)

YES, WE CAN?

WHISTLEBLOWING: Service to society or serious treason?

Sit down and listen to the controversial opinions of journalists, whistleblowers, activists and philosophers. (Objektbeschriftung)

Pro: “Whistleblowing helps to establish responsibility where there is insufficient transparency or too many ways of covering up injustices.” (German Whistleblower Network, 10 Theses About Whistleblowing)

“But transparency also reveals a variety of links, dependencies and privileges.” (Christian Heller, blogger)

“State secrets that comply with law deserve protection. Injustices do not.” (Heribert Prantl, Süddeutsche Zeitung)

“Yes. To develop people’s faith in democracy, rather than tolerating wrongdoing, we need to talk about it. Only then can we be sure it won’t happen again.” (Anders Kærgaard, Whistleblower)

“Ultimately, whistleblowing is based on the freedom of expression, so it’s an undeniable human right.” (German Whistleblower Network, 10 Theses About Whistleblowing)

“But it is not admissible to differentiate between the protection of the state and the protection of the constitution. The state can only be protected within its constitution.” (Adolf Arndt, Neue Juristische Wochenzeitschrift)

Contra: “However, certain processes require secrecy in order to serve the common good.” (Torsten Krauel, Die Welt)

“In a society that no longer has the courage to secrecy, there can be no more “arcana,” no more hierarchy, no more secret diplomacy; in fact, no more politics. To every great politics belongs the secret. (Byung-Chul Han, University of the Arts, Berlin)

“So in this system of total transparency and publicity, will those who refuse to yield be branded a public nuisance?” (Kurt Kister, Süddeutsche Zeitung)

“Forwarding documents not intended for the general public is becoming trivialised – but at the same time, people who search for leaks are being branded ‘villains’.” (Hans Georg Maaßen, Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution)

“What if the documents are state secrets whose public disclosure could severely endanger the external security of the Federal Republic of Germany?” (cf. section 94 of the German Criminal Code, treason and prejudice of the external security)

“Data protection provisions are also protected under the Basic Law. What if more facts enter the public realm than would be necessary for clarification?” (Prof. Alexander Thiele, Free University of Berlin)

AT HOME

Welcome to our home. Sit down, make yourself comfortable.

Are these SECRETS lurking in your family as well? (Objektbeschriftung)

1: Beautiful Secrets

Beautiful secrets have positive effects. They happen for a brief moment and are about fun and surprises – gifts, visits and parties, for instance. Because they are positive, they can temporarily alter relationships and establish new bonds. They are our unspoken hopes, dreams and memories.

Shhhh, I know something you don't know...

2: Constructive Secrets

Constructive secrets are the borders that define and shape our interpersonal relationships. They are the kind of secret that brings us closer and bonds us when we share them. Formative and lasting, they are particularly important for adolescents, and for the personal development of children and teenagers. We create them to develop our selves, and to strengthen our own interpersonal relationships and sense of belonging.

“Secrets give us a safe haven and the freedom to find out who we are.” (Gail Saltz)

3: Toxic Secrets

Toxic secrets are not dangerous physically but can harm interpersonal relationships. Long-standing or recent, their effects are the same: they can challenge identities and spread great uncertainty in families or partnerships. Examples include affairs, illegitimate children or family members who engage in political or religious extremism.

“Nothing makes people more suspicious than knowing too little.” (Francis Bacon)

4: Dangerous Secrets

Some secrets can harm or even kill people, such as (sexual) violence against children or partners, alcohol, drug, or substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies. Disclosing them can entail moral and legal dilemmas, for instance for doctors, therapists and pastoral workers. Bound to secrecy, these professionals can only assist with the consent of the individual concerned.

Why didn't you protect me?

5: Folder: Do you know how much your parents earn? / Are your secrets damaging to your relationships with family and friends? / Do you behave differently when you are keeping a secret?

6: Teddy bear: Where do I come from?

7: Glasses: What will people think? / Is this just my secret? / Does it affect the reputation of my family? / Am I harming my family?

Vase: Truth and lies are particularly important in families. Family secrets are never completely private; they are always connected to the societies in which they are embedded, as families are the interface between the individual and society.

Text Lampe: Whose secret is my secret?

- Text Ordnerrücken: Do you know what your parents earn?
Does your behaviour change when you have a secret to keep?
Are your secrets damaging to your relationship with family and friends?
- Wandtattoo: What happens at home stays at home.
- Texte Gläser What will people think?
Am I the only one who knows about this?
Does it affect my family's reputation?
Am I harming my family?
- Texte Kissen: Where have you been?
Where are you going?
What are you thinking?
Who's that?
- Texte Schubladen: Shhh... I know something you don't know...
Secrets provide a safe harbour in which we are free to find out who we are.
Nothing makes people more angry than not knowing enough.
Why didn't you protect me?

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY?

Our smartphones are like a digital alter ego. From photos, music, emails and notes to contacts and chats, we keep everything on them – which makes the question of our entitlement to privacy within a relationship is all the more crucial. On the other hand, perhaps my significant other has something to hide if I don't know their entry PIN...?

If they've nothing to hide, they might not mind if we check their phones?

Dear All,

... I've been following this discussion and wondered at first whether I should join in...

ME

11 December, 9:41

Hi,

Just asking: would you ever snoop in your partner's mobile? Why?

Just wondering...

Andy

11 December, 9:54

Your partner's phone is none of your business. If you feel you have to check up on them to make sure there's nothing going on, you clearly don't trust them.

Micha

11 December, 10:01

That's not what I'm asking... Sure, a lack of trust makes life miserable for both sides. But I'm genuinely interested to know why soooo many people have a problem with snooping on someone else's mobile. If there's nothing going on, there's nothing to get worked up about, right?

Chris

11 December, 10:10

But it also depends on whether you do it behind their back or not. If you feel you need to check their phone without them knowing, then you clearly have a trust issue...

Kathi

11 December, 10:22

That happened to me once. I had a boyfriend who didn't trust me at all. He thought I was cheating on him with an ex. Secretly getting up at night to check someone's phone is a no-no. I threw him out and ended the relationship because he didn't trust me.

Micha

11 December, 10:40

There's no smoke without fire...Otherwise why would you be fuming? 😊
I have nothing to hide, so my partner can check my phone any time.

Dani

11 December, 12:18

You really don't get why people don't like to be snooped on? I don't snoop on my husband's mobile because I RESPECT his privacy. It's totally ridiculous to say keeping something private means you must have something to hide.

Steff

11 December, 13:04

I can't really follow your logic. Surely everyone can expect at least some privacy? That includes mobiles and emails. It's all about TRUST.

Dani

11 December, 13:18

Exactly, but most people here just want to show they're in total symbiosis with their partners without getting on each other's nerves. And because we've all turned into identical twins, we don't have any secrets any more, right?!?!?! 🤔🤔🤔

Sascha

11 December, 13:44

What do you mean, 'nothing to hide'? ☹ To my mind, personal space is an existential basic need, so everybody should have some. I also see it as fundamental in my own relationships.

Susanna

12 December, 9:48

Hi All,

Dear All,

... I've been following this discussion and wondered at first whether I should join in... because I'm one of the people who snoop in other people's phones. That's right, I look at my partner's phone!

Deliberately. And I don't feel bad about it!

Susanna

CREEPY COMPANION

Virtual assistants like Alexa are making their way into more and more homes. But what do you actually know about Alexa? One thing is for sure: she probably knows quite a lot about you! To help make your life easier, Alexa needs to know your wishes, habits and needs. And if they are connected to your calendars, online wishlists with retailers, contacts and so on, virtual assistants can perform fully: they can place orders for you, suggest music and recipes, and search the internet to answer your questions.

But does Alexa know things you don't intend her to know as well? Does she really only listen when spoken to? And where does all the information she collects finally end up? Who has it? And what country are they in?

How much assistance do you really need?

MIRACLE MACHINE

Talking and listening. Relieved? (Objektbeschriftung)

Confession...

... is self-reflection. Admitting faults. Remorse.

... is a brutally honest communication that needs to be held behind closed doors.

... makes the confessional box a miracle machine that transforms guilt and secrets into a spectacular form of redemption.

... offers a safe place to tell the truth.

... does not follow the usual logic of the public.

... stems from the French word “confesser”, which means “to acknowledge”.

Note down on a “confession note” what you find most difficult to say. Then roll your paper into a little ball. Leave the confessional box and choose a secret-bearer to entrust it to. Throw the note into the corresponding auditory channel.

WHO DO YOU REALLY TRUST?

Bearers of secrets are our personal ‘listeners’.

Now go to the “speaking cabin” opposite and get things off your chest.
(Objektbeschriftung)

Mother/ father – sibling – partner – best friend – therapist – pastoral worker – coworker

THE SELF

Everybody is a BLACK BOX. What’s in yours? (Objektbeschriftung)

“The greatest secret is man himself.” (Novalis)

Are we demystifying the world?

When I know a secret, what does it do to me?

Why are you keeping it a secret?

Does a secret really only belong to the person who knows it?

Does everyone have a right to a secret?

Who is worthy of knowing your secret?

Am I right to tell my secret?

Is it my duty to keep other people's secrets?

Is your secret something embarrassing?

How valuable is your secret?

Do I really need to get something off my chest or am I just trying to be interesting?

Does everybody keep secrets?

KINDER-/ JUGENDZIMMER

Height chart

"A secret is something you don't want to tell anyone." (Anna, age 5)

"If a friend tells you a secret, you should keep it." (Stefan, age 10)

"I think that if someone tells you a secret, you should be proud – because then you really know they think you're a true friend, right?" (Tanja, age 12)

"A secret is what you're not allowed to tell anyone." (Max, age 6)

Book of friends

First name:

Age:

Hometown:

Instagram / Tik Tok / Facebook name:

Your greatest wish / secret:

Your favourite person:

Your favourite saying:

Your favourite thing:

Your most embarrassing moment:

What makes a good secret?

What makes a bad secret?

What do you do when someone tells you a bad secret?

What do you do when someone shares a really good secret with you?

ANGELS CARE

Baby tech is totally on trend, with cameras and sensors monitoring the wellbeing and whereabouts of increasing numbers of babies and children. Thanks to mobile data transmission and cloud access, parents, friends and grandparents can watch exactly what's going on, conveniently and in realtime, anywhere in the world. The older the children get, the more products and functions are added, such as tracking and location services.

But how much information does it take to be genuinely paying attention? How much is about genuine technological advance? And how much about control?

TELL ME MORE!

Secrets are exciting, so they're a natural part of children's lives. Good ones are for keeping, but bad ones need to be brought out into the open, because some people – grownups as well as kids – will readily exploit a child's fascination with secrecy.

How much should children reveal about themselves?

TRUTH OR FORFEIT?

Reveal your secret or do a forfeit proposed by the friend or relative who is with you today.

THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS

Kids love secrets. They have their own secrets, things that they keep from other people, and secrets that they share with a group. Their secrets tend to be about hidden treasure, secret signs, codes, surprises or affairs of the heart. But what cognitive abilities does it take to have or keep a secret? It's not until children grasp the difference between "me" and "the others" that they develop an understanding of how to keep things or knowledge from other people – and differentiate themselves from others in the process. When they reach school age and start sharing their secrets, confiding becomes a measure of friendship and trust.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL!

One famous example of a secret code that children use is the Caesar cipher. Here each letter of the alphabet is replaced with another one a fixed number of positions down the alphabet. If that number is two, "A" becomes "C", "B" becomes "D", "C" becomes "E" and so on. In ancient antiquity, messages were encrypted with the help of two concentric discs, called Caesar discs. These had the alphabet engraved on them – clockwise on one, anticlockwise on the other – and were used to produce the reverse Caesar cipher.

Do it yourself:

Around the outside of the larger disc are the letters of the alphabet in the usual order. Use the inner disc to set your own secret alphabet. If your alphabet starts

with “C”, for instance, you will need to turn the disc so that the “C” is beneath the “A” of the larger disc.

This will mean “B” becomes “D”, “C” becomes “E” and so on...

To decode your message, the recipient will need to reverse the allocation of the letters. So the “secret D” becomes a “B”, the “secret E” a “C”, and so on.

But don’t forget to tell your recipient which letter your secret alphabet starts with!