MIND READER

The New Science of
Deciphering What People Really Think,
What They Really Want,
and Who They Really Are

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NEVER BE LIED TO AGAIN

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What They Really Want, AND
Who They Really Are

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Discover what someone really thinks—even thoughts that lie deep in their subconscious mind—no matter what they say or do.

Find out how a person really feels about those in their life—whom they feel close to, whom they admire, and whom they secretly despise.

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Introduction

For thirty years, I've been developing psychological insights into human nature with strategies to enhance the quality of people's lives and relationships. In 1998, I wrote a book, called *Never Be Lied to Again,* that introduced specifically formulated techniques to help people detect deception in their everyday lives. Nearly a decade later, I wrote *You Can Read Anyone,* which was a follow-up to the first book and updated the science of reading people. Now, roughly another decade later, thanks to emerging research in psycholinguistics, neuroscience, and the cognitive and behavioral sciences, this new book takes a quantum leap forward. I will introduce you to the most advanced, cutting-edge methods in profiling people, which will give you near-telepathic abilities. In any situation—from a casual conversation to an in-depth negotiation—you will find what people really think and feel, regardless of what they claim. You will be privy to what lies deep in their subconscious mind, even when they themselves may be in denial and unwilling (or unable) to confront their thoughts, feelings, and fears on a conscious level.

Mindreader covers brand-new ground and relies little on age-old, outdated body language signs and signals. Many experts, for example, claim that crossed arms and legs suggest defensiveness or disagreement. While this interpretation is not technically wrong, you will get a lot of false positives if your subject is seated in a cold room in a chair without an armrest. And yes, little or no direct eye contact is a classic sign of deception. But the bad guys already know this, so unless your subject is a five-year-old caught with his hand in an actual cookie jar, you'll need more

sophisticated tactics. More chillingly, how do you accurately read a psychotic person who believes his own lies? Or a sociopath who looks you straight in the eyes and swears up and down on a stack of Bibles that he's telling the truth?[1]

We can now also move well beyond stereotypical strategies for reading people that purport to reveal stunning insights into the psyche based on superficial observations of dress. Does a religious pendant reflect deeply held spiritual values? Not necessarily. Maybe the person is wearing one to offset guilt because she lives antithetically to such ideals. Maybe she wears it for sentimental reasons, perhaps because it was her grandmother's. Do a power suit and well-shined shoes indicate ambition, and are sweatpants a sign of laziness? Not at all. Perhaps someone dresses casually because she's comfortable in her own skin and doesn't care what others think; then again, maybe she's grossly insecure but wants to appear not to care.

Another stalwart favorite is to extrapolate assumptions based on a single behavior. But this is nonsense. Just because your friend is always late doesn't necessarily mean he's inconsiderate. Maybe he's a perfectionist who has to have everything just right before he leaves. Maybe he gets an adrenaline rush by waiting until the last minute. Maybe his mother always insisted that he be on time and is leading a subconscious rebellion. Maybe he's a bit spacey and loses track of time. If we rely on surface assumptions, the opportunities to misread people are endless.

So what *does* work? The techniques I'll teach you herein draw from multiple disciplines—I teach these methods to the FBI's elite Behavioral Analysis Unit, the CIA, the NSA, almost every branch of the U.S. military, and law enforcement agencies around the world. All you have to do is pay attention to a few key elements, which will unveil a near-magical magnifying glass into a person's state of mind, his thoughts and feelings, and, most valuably, the degree of his integrity and emotional health.

Best of all, many of the techniques work without the need for interacting with your subject—oftentimes merely from listening to a conversation, speech, or recording, such as a voice-mail message. Or even from reading an email. The ability to read people, without having to see them, is ever more vital in an age when face masks and video conferencing can render even reliable facial and body language signs completely inert.

In the chapters to come, I'll show you step-by-step how to tell exactly what someone is thinking in real-life situations. For example, you will see precisely how to determine whether a person is trustworthy or dishonest, whether a coworker is troubled or just plain moody, or whether a first date is going your way or going south. And when the stakes are high—negotiations; interrogations; questions of abuse, theft, or fraud—you'll learn how to save yourself time, money, energy, and heartache by identifying who has your best interests at heart and who does not.

The reason my work is so widely used by law enforcement is because the techniques are easy to use and uncannily accurate, but only when used responsibly. I urge you not to abandon reason and common sense—or, for that matter, a relationship—due to a two-second surface read. It would be reckless to base your assumptions of a person's honesty, integrity, or intentions—let alone their emotional health—on an off-hand remark or fleeting interaction.

Throughout this book single-sentence examples are used to illustrate the psychology. In real life, it would be prudent to rely on longer speech or writing samples before making any determination. As we will see throughout the book, a single, casual reference may not mean anything, but a consistent pattern of syntax reveals everything.[2]

When there's a lot on the line, take the time to build a reliable profile. Although this book is categorized into multiple parts and chapters, the methods I aim to teach you in each chapter are designed to build on the previous ones and should be folded into the process to enhance your overall assessment.

As you learn more about others, my hope is that you will also come to learn more about yourself and that with greater self-awareness you will gain the opportunity to enhance your own emotional health, life, and relationships. Enjoy a predictive edge in every conversation and situation—and in life itself—when you gain the ability to know what anyone is really thinking, what they really want, and who they really are.

Poker Corner

The game of poker is, in many ways, a psychological lab of human behavior and serves as a wonderful real-life metaphor in which tactics can be employed to read people. Even if you're unacquainted with the game, I think you will enjoy these insights and applications as we move through the book.

PART I

SUBCONSCIOUS REVEALS

From a casual conversation to an in-depth negotiation, find out what people really think and feel. You will be privy to what lies deep in their subconscious mind—even when they themselves may be in denial and unwilling or unable to confront their thoughts, feelings, and fears on a conscious level. Discover what people really think about you and how much power and control they believe they have in all of their relationships, both personal and professional.

CHAPTER 1

What They **Really** Think

By paying close attention not only to what people say but also to *how* they say it—their language pattern and sentence structure—you can figure out what's really going on inside their head. To demonstrate how this works, we begin with a quick and painless grammar lesson.

A personal pronoun, in the grammatical sense, is associated with a certain individual or group of individuals. It can be subjective, objective, or possessive, depending on usage. Grammatically speaking, when discussing a person or persons, there are three separate perspectives:

- First person (i.e., *I, me, my,* and *mine* or *we, us, our,* and *ours*)
- Second person (i.e., *you, your,* and *yours*)
- Third person (i.e., *he, him,* and *his; she, her,* and *hers;* and *they, them,* and *theirs*)

On the surface, it might seem as if pronouns simply replace nouns so that people don't have to repeat the same words over and over again. "John lost John's wallet somewhere in John's house" is not exactly an elegant sentence. "John lost his

wallet somewhere in his house" just sounds better. But from a psycholinguistic standpoint, pronouns can reveal whether someone is trying to distance or altogether separate himself from his words. In much the same way that an unsophisticated liar might look away from you because eye contact increases intimacy and a person who is lying often feels a degree of guilt, a person making an untrue statement often seeks to subconsciously distance himself from his own words. The personal pronouns (e.g., *I, me, mine,* and *my*) indicate that a person is committed to and confident about his statement. Omitting personal pronouns from the action may signal someone's reluctance to accept ownership of his words.

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Let's take the everyday example of giving a compliment. A woman who believes what she's saying is more likely to use a personal pronoun—for instance, "I really liked your presentation," or "I loved what you said in the meeting." However, a person offering insincere flattery might choose to say "Nice presentation" or "Looks like you did a lot of research." In the second case, she has removed herself from the equation entirely. Those in law enforcement are well acquainted with this principle and recognize when people are filing a false report about their car being stolen because they typically refer to it as "the car" or "that car" and not "my car" or "our car." Of course, you can't gauge a person's honesty by a single sentence, but it's the first clue.

A Distant Second

Even when a personal pronoun is present, a switch from *active* to *passive voice* may signify a lack of sincerity. The active voice is stronger and more directly interactive, revealing that the subject—the person or the people, in our examples—performs the

action of the verb in the sentence. With the passive voice, the subject is acted upon by some other entity.

For example, "I gave her the pen" is in active voice, while "The pen was given to her by me" uses passive voice. Notice the shift in phrasing and how it subtly decreases the speaker's personal responsibility. To wit, let's say that two siblings are playing, and the younger one starts to cry. Most of the time, when mom or dad asks what's going on, the reason the child is crying—as stated by the other child—is because "he fell," "she got hurt," or "he banged his head." A child rarely says, "I did (action A) that caused (consequence B)." Indeed, it's unusual for a child (the egocentric beings that they are) to assume responsibility and declare: "I pushed him into the wall, and he hit his head," or "I should have been more careful when she climbed on my back."

Let's look at this in another context. In a study titled "Words That Cost You the Job Interview," researchers assessed the interview language of hundreds of thousands of real-life job candidates. Based on language patterns alone, they successfully divided these candidates into low and high performers.[1] Here's what they found:

- High-performer answers contain roughly 60 percent more first-person pronouns (e.g., *I, me, we*).
- Low-performer answers contain about 400 percent more second-person pronouns (e.g., *you, your*).
- Low-performer answers contain about 90 percent more third-person pronouns (e.g., *he, she, they*).

High performers put themselves front and center in the action because they can call upon actual experiences. Low performers don't. They can't. They are more likely to give abstract or hypothetical answers because they lack real-world experience and success.[2]

High-performer language: "I call my customers every month to see how they're doing." Or "I made two hundred calls every day at ABC Corp."

Low-performer language: "Customers should be contacted regularly." Or "You [or one] should always call the customer and ask them to share…"

When you take yourself out of the proverbial action, you send a concealed message (possibly even from yourself). Ask a child about her first day at camp, and note how the same summation reveals two different impressions of her experience: the first, more enthusiastic and the second, lackluster:

> **RESPONSE A:** "I ate breakfast, then we went over to the park to play on the swings until I got to go swimming."
>
> **RESPONSE B:** "First, it was breakfast, then they moved us over to the park to play on the swings until they sent us to the swimming pool."

The use of the passive tense or the absence of a pronoun also softens a message that may be ill received or confrontational. For example, one might excitedly proclaim, "We won the game!" but not "The game was won [by us]" because the active voice with a personal pronoun conveys solidarity with the message, thus invoking an assumption of pleasure and pride. Likewise, politicians tend to phrase reluctant admissions or apologies to dilute direct responsibility, including such gems as "Mistakes were made," "The truth had some deficits," and "The people deserve better." The phraseology also hints to the character of the speaker. When your tailor informs you that "I made a mistake on your hem," rather than, "A mistake was made," we can surmise that he operates with a greater degree of honesty and integrity.[3]

The Great Divide

Distancing language assumes many shapes and sizes. Take a look at the following pairs of phrases and ask yourself which ones strike the chord of greater authenticity.

> "I stand in awe" versus "I'm in awe."

"I find myself filled with pride" versus "I am so proud."

"I, for one, am glad" versus "I'm so glad."

"I am a great admirer" versus "I greatly admire."

The first phrasings are all attempts to imprint the message with an emotional intensity but fail in convincing the keen observer because of two linguistic giveaways. First, a heightened emotional state is associated with a simplified grammatical structure, not the more florid ones. Sincere, emotionally laden sentences are short and to the point. Think: "Help!" or "I love you." Second, the speaker creates a separation between himself (the "I") and the emotional sentiment. Which of these statements sounds more believable?

> **STATEMENT A:** "I'm so grateful that my wife was found alive. I'm indebted to all of the rescue workers."
>
> **STATEMENT B:** "I, for one, am so grateful that my wife was found alive. I find myself indebted to all of the rescue workers."

Statement A resonates as heartfelt while Statement B feels like a PR release. The second statement is not worrisome if the speaker has had time to compose himself and his thoughts. However, an impromptu, emotionally charged situation should exhibit a language pattern more consistent with Statement A.

At such times, clichés and metaphors are also highly suspect. A person using them in an attempt to portray himself as impassioned is trying to economically convey an emotion that is not real. Manufacturing emotion takes lot of mental energy, so the person uses borrowed phrases. For example, ask any trauma victim about what happened, and you will not get a Nietzschean quote such as "To live is to suffer; to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering" or a cliché such as "That's the way the cookie crumbles."

Certainly, with the passage of time and a shift in perspective, we may adopt a more philosophical view. Yet no one will ever convey an emotionally charged encounter by reciting the latest Pinterest quote on the beauty of suffering. Likewise, if someone proffers that a traumatic experience is "indelibly in my amygdala"

(emotional memories are stored in this part of the brain), it reeks of inauthenticity. There needs to be emotional congruence.

Far-reaching research into real-life, high-stakes public appeals for help with missing relatives found that genuine pleas contained more verbal expressions of hope of finding the missing person alive, more positive emotions toward the relative, and an avoidance of brutal or harsh language.[4] In short, the pleas are rich with raw emotion and optimism rather than mottos and slogans peppered with negativity.

Euphemistically Speaking

Faux silk is polyester. Leatherette is made from plastic. Manufacturers do not label their goods to deceive per se but rather to alter perceptions. After all, some words strike a negative visceral chord. Euphemisms can help blunt the emotional impact. It is for this reason that good salespeople won't tell you to "sign the contract" but will rather suggest that you "okay the paperwork." Even though both phrases point to the same action, it has been ingrained in us that we should be wary of signing a contract without first having a lawyer review it. But okaying paperwork, that's something you can do without worrying, right?

A skilled interrogator knows to avoid harsh words or phrases—such as *embezzlement, murder, lying, confession*—and to stay away from language that pits him against his subject. For instance, rather than insisting, "Stop lying and tell me the truth," they'd say, "Let's hear the whole story" or "Let's clear the air for everyone's sake."

Politicians understand more than most people the power of words to influence attitudes and behavior. During a military action, we would rather hear of "collateral damage" than be told that civilians were accidentally killed, and we are not as disturbed hearing of "friendly fire" as we would be to learn that our soldiers shot at one another. And, of course, when watching the morning news, we are less moved being told of "casualties" than we would be if the reporter used the word *deaths*.

In everyday life, we do the same thing: We may refer to the toilet as the bathroom, powder room, men's room, or ladies' room. Indeed, we would rather tell

our insurance company of the "fender bender" than use the word *collision.* And, of course, letting an employee "go" or telling him he is being "laid off" is often the preferred language over being "fired."

The use of a euphemism informs us that the individual wants to dilute or deflect directness and may be (a) attempting to minimize their request or their deeds, (b) concerned that their message will be ill received, (c) uncomfortable with the topic itself, or (d) any combination thereof.

Here and *There*

A person's subconscious effort to associate himself—with his listener, the content of his communication, or the object of communication—is also achieved through the use of what's called *spatial immediacy.*[5] Adverbs like *this* and *that, these* and *those,* and *here* and *there* show where a person or an object is in relation to the speaker. These words also illuminate emotional distance. Oftentimes we use spatial immediacy to refer to someone or something that we feel positive toward and want to be associated with (e.g., "*This* is an interesting idea" or "*Here* is an interesting idea"). It is important to note that the converse is not instructive. A colleague who says, "That's an interesting idea," is not necessarily feigning enthusiasm. Language that reflects closeness and connection is correlated with one's feelings, but a parallel should not be assumed with distancing language.

The psychological intricacies abound because distancing language may indicate a psychological defense mechanism called *detachment.* In a therapeutic setting, for example, an astute analyst is aware that when a patient frequently avoids or omits personal pronouns, they may be trying to avoid intimacy, candor, or responsibility.[6] Be alert to the use of a second-person pronoun such as *you* or the third-person *one.* Although these are often meant in a universal context that applies to everyone ("You should always say *please* and *thank you*"), the use of *you* or *one* when we mean *I* or *my* does signal emotional unease. For example, imagine that a manager tells an employee to better manage his workflow and not wait until the last minute to take care of important issues. Consider two possible responses: